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PIPPIN

BY

ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

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To

G. K. Chesterton

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PIPPIN

PIPPIN

CHAPTER I

PIPPIN GOES OFF TO SEE THE WORLD

Pippin shut to the house door and stood outside in the fresh air of the morning.

It was very early. He had caught the world half awake, half asleep. The grass was white with dew, the shadow of night still clung about the trees of the orchard, the birds in the lilacs were only twittering. The house behind him was in a dead sleep. Its deep eaves hung over blinded windows and no breath of household life went up from its chimneys.

Pippin opened the garden gate, and let it fall to with a clatter behind him. He threw one glance back at his home, old and warm and patient, and swung off up the hill with the strong step of youth. He walked fast because he was setting out to see the world, and the world won't wait for youth, although age finds it in less of a hurry.

As he strode up the hill, between high banks starred with primroses and crowned with budding beeches, the earth suddenly stretched itself and woke up.

Some men and women, and nearly all children, who live close to nature, know this moment when the earth springs up from its sleep, although most miss it, and cannot tell why the birds suddenly begin to shout in chorus. It is a

little lighter than it was a minute ago, but it was a little lighter then than a minute before. What has happened? The birds know. A minute ago there was some doubt as to whether the sun would really rise again. Now there is nc doubt at all. There is at least one more jolly day to come before the end.

Young Pippin was good to look at as he strode up the hill, with all the world to himself and life in front of him. His fair hair curled crisply, his eyes were blue and merry, his face freckled, his mouth kind and sensitive. He was dressed in a suit of rough homespun. He carried a pack, and a stout ash sapling with a natural crook—none of your curved handles bent with steam for him!—served for swinging to his stride and cutting at the wayside weeds. He would have small need of it for supporting his steps. But a good honest stick is company for a man, and the hand likes it, being a little jealous of the stout work committed to the feet, when the master of both walks abroad.

When he had paid due toll to the promise of another day with a quick laugh of pleasure, and a sniffing of the nostrils at the virginal keen air, he fell silent and thoughtful for a time, looking on the ground as he walked. He was thinking of the farewell he had taken of his old father and mother the night before; and this is the picture his memory laid out for him.

On either side of the deep hearth was an old wooden chair, with arms and a high back and a cushioned seat. There is no chair like a wooden chair for comfort and self-respect combined. Our fathers knew nothing of those big, low, heavily padded chairs for the enjoyment of which you must give up your will to rise and go about your business if the spirit moves you. Besides, they woo

you to sleep, and the proper place for sleep is a bed, whether of hay or feathers.

In one of these chairs sat Pippin's father, and in the other his mother, for the best part of the day. For they were both old. Pippin was the child of their middle-age. The name they had given him at the font was almost forgotten, for immediately afterwards they had given him another. He was like a red, sweet, juicy, lusty apple of the orchard; and, out of all the foolish names with which they had mocked lovingly at his helplessness, that of Pippin had clung to him throughout his years.

Pippin's father sat hour after hour by the hearth, on which the great logs blazed merrily, or flickered on their bed of grey ashes, their fire dying down like the fire of his life. Out of all that he had done and desired and fought for, there remained to him the hearth and the good roof above his head; a little food and a little sleep; his old wife, whose continual presence stirred him now a little less than her absence would have done; his long, long thoughts of the past, so clear, so wise, and so fruitless; and his son.

When Pippin was in the room his thoughts left the fire in which he saw so much, and followed him. His son stood for everything he had lost, the hope and the strength and the passion of manhood. He was the fruit of his own loins, and would carry on in himself and in his children's children that joyful tussle with fate, in which a man is beaten before he enters the ring, but never admits it, until his enemy, having let him play for a while, robs him of his weapons and makes an end of him.

Pippin's mother was not so old as his father by some years, but she could not walk without help and sat per-

force in her chair with a table by her side busying herself with whatever lay to her hand. She beguiled the long hours with talk, uttering whatever came into her mind, as is the way with women, in whom a seed of thought immediately becomes a flower of speech, but, as it has had little time to germinate, not always a very good one, though better than a man's would be if forced in the same way. For the top soil of a woman's mind is commonly productive, but you must dig deeper into a man's.

So the old woman talked, and the old man sat silent. But beneath the cover of her chatter there was experience as deep as his. She had been his willing helpmate through their life together, and the things that he had desired and worked for she had desired and worked for too, not that she might enjoy them, but that he might. She had gone through pain and trouble to bear him the child in whose begetting he had known only delight. Hers had been the care, and hers the fears. And she could not stay herself with the thought that her child would grow more like her, for the older a son grows the more he loses that part of herself which his mother gave him, however strong the love that may bind them together.

The old woman chattered and the old man sat silent, piling up mountains of slow orderly thoughts. And of the two perhaps she was the happier, for she lived more in the present, and, if she searched in the cupboard of her mind for memories, she took out only the happy ones and let the bitter lie. This again is the way of a woman, and she is not to be blamed for it.

Well then, the two old folk sat by the fire after their evening meal, and their son sat between them, or walked up and down the length of the room as he talked. For he

had something very serious to impart and was all astir in mind and body until the matter should be settled.

He must go out and see the world. That was the end of it all. Home was a very good place, but a young man could have too much of it. This he wrapped up a little, but it was plain what he meant. The spring pricked his blood and he was for starting at once.

It took him a long time to say it, for at the first word of leaving home his mother's fears arose, and his plea was much broken by her complaints and reproaches. Indeed, before the end she had spoken more words than he had.

First of all she lauded his home. What young man had a better one, or more freedom to come and go within its confines?

None, said Pippin. It was a very pleasant home and he would come back to it.

"To find our places empty, very like. Do you grudge your old father and mother their places by the fire, Pippin? All the rest is yours, the fields and the woods and the barns. You are as good as master. And you will only have to wait a little while until you are master in name as well as deed."

"I do not want to be master," said Pippin. "Nothing is further from my mind. But as the time must come—may it be far distant—when I shall be, I must see the world before I settle down in this little corner of it."

"I have lived here all my long life," she said, "in this house or my father's—in two houses and the same beautiful country all my years."

"But my father hasn't. He would not have been the man he is, or done what he has done, if he had not seen

the world in his youth. You are a woman, mother. You don't understand."

"I understand this," she said, "that a man always wants some new thing. It was just the same when you were a child, Pippin; if I gave you one toy, which you asked for, and thought to have a moment's peace, you were crying for another before I had time to settle to anything."

And so it went on between them, the old man sitting silent looking into the fire, and seeing there, perhaps, pictures of the adventures of his own youth.

But when his mother found she could not move him by argument she stretched out her arms to him and cried, "Oh, Pippin, stay with us. We love you, and we shall keep you such a little time. In a few years at most you may go where you will. We shall not be here to stop you."

Pippin was moved by her tears, and might have put off his purpose. But at this point his father spoke, in his thin, slow voice.

He spoke to his wife. "Let us hear what it is that he wants," he said. "And he must speak to us quite plainly. Freedom is a good thing for a young man. I do not blame him for desiring that."

Then Pippin understood two things: first that he must speak out freely all the discontent that had been growing in his mind now for weeks past, even at the risk of hurting those whom he loved; and second, that if his mother would hold him back his father would help him to know his mind, wise old man that he was, and with something to show for his close upon eighty years of experience.

But his mother broke in. "Freedom!" she echoed. "I

tell him that he is free now, in the house and on the land. Both are as good as his already, and will be his very own in a few years, when we are both gone."

"He is not yet of an age to be held by possessions," said the old man. "And no man is quite free who is tied to a house and land."

"How you talk!" said his wife sorrowfully. "It is what you have worked for night and day, year in and year out ever since we were married."

"Ever since we were married," the old man acquiesced with a bend of the head. "Pippin, do you not value what I have gained for you by the toil of my hands and my brain?"

"Oh, yes, I do," cried Pippin. "I love my home, and yet I want to leave it. I don't know why."

"You must find out why, if we are to give our consent to your going," said his father drily. "You are young yet, but you are old enough to know what is in your own mind, and if you do not, to discover it."

"Well then," said Pippin shamefacedly. "I find life very dull."

"Dull!" echoed his mother, shrilly, holding up hands of horror. "You have your own horse to ride. You are not tied to any work that you need do. You can hunt in the winter and play games in the summer. You have friends to play with, boys and girls, and they are made welcome here."

"I see no new faces," said Pippin.

"Old faces are better than new," said his mother.

The old man spoke again, holding up a thin hand for silence. "Now listen," he said. "I have seen this coming; for I see many things, though I do not stir from my

chair by the hearth. Pippin, you have everything that a man can desire, and yet you find it dull. Why?"

"I don't know," said Pippin after a pause. "I find it dull, but I don't know why."

"Then I will tell you. It is because you have not won it for yourself. If you had you would cling to it, as I do still, though I am very old."

Pippin had nothing to say to this. He only knew that the good house in which he had been born, and the fair acres around it, seemed like a cage to him. His life weighed heavily. There was nothing to look forward to. He was tired of play, and it was true, as his mother had said, that there was no work he need do unless he liked. He had everything that he ought to have wanted, and he wanted none of it. But for the old folks, how gladly would he have given up his inheritance and gone out into the world to make his own way. Anything would be better than this life of stagnation, which, stretching in front of him through illimitable years, now seemed insupportable.

His father spoke again. "You shall go away," he said. "You shall go away for a year;" with his hand he stilled his wife's cries of remonstrance; "for a year you are not to come back for any reason, and you may stay longer if you wish. I will give you a little money, but not enough to keep you for a year. You must work for your living, in any way that pleases you."

"I am strong enough," said Pippin. "I can do that if you wish it." He did not want work at that moment. He wanted freedom.

"I do wish it. You must learn to value what I have gained for you, and that is the only way. I tell you that you are a fool to hold it so lightly, but my telling will

not mend your disease, which is that of youth. You want to see the great city?"

"Yes," said Pippin.

"Very well, then. Go and see it, and find out for yourself that if its streets were paved with gold, as foolish people think them, they would not be worth exchanging for the pleasant acres you will soon call your own. See the crowds of people who live there, and then think of the faces of your friends whom you now despise. See strange and curious sights, and learn to hunger for the quiet familiar places. Earn your bread and remember the plenty that you had for the asking. Go where you will and do what you will, and find out that a man without a tie is like a kite without a string. I do not blame you for not knowing these things. But they are true, and that you must learn for yourself."

Pippin was quite prepared to accept all this as true; but all the same he wanted to get away.

"You must take the road," his father went on. "Travel light and make friends with all sorts. Hear what you can of the lives of other men and women."

"That is what I want to do," said Pippin eagerly.

"You have your share of the curiosity of youth," said his father drily; "and a knack of sympathy. You will hear stories, and you must try and profit by them. Walk through the country till you come to the city, and walk back again when your time is up. Never care about where your next meal is to be found, or where you are to lay your head at night. You will get most out of your journey in that way."

And now Pippin was gay and excited again. His father had called him a fool and gone near to chiding

him, but he had shown too that he knew what a young man wanted. To walk through the fair country in the budding spring, to meet unknown and therefore interesting people, to see how life went, away from this quiet patch of country soil, to eat and drink and sleep where he pleased, and in a new place every time, to have the desired city as his goal: this was enough for him at present. What should come after could wait. "When may I set out?" he asked.

His mother, almost weeping, began to babble of clothes and provisions and countless preparations, but his father cut her short.

"Set out to-morrow at dawn," he said. "We will bid you good-bye to-night. When you have learnt wisdom from the men and women you meet on your travels, a little pity and perhaps a little love, come back to us, my son. You will find us waiting here for you, if you do not put off your coming too long."

That was the memory Pippin bore with him as he breasted the long hill between the primrose-studded banks: two old people by the hearth in his home, one bidding him go forth from it, the other pleading with him to stay; and it made him a little sad, even on the threshold of his adventure. For in both voices he had heard the note that comes before the end, and, old as his parents were, he had never yet thought of them as ready to leave him, however ready he might be to leave them.

He was glad that it had not been necessary to tell them that he had meant to set out at dawn that morning in any case.

He came to the crown of the hill, and his spirits rose

again. He was in a country of rolling down, grey-green on the chalky ridges, with the cloudy purple of massed budding trees in the hollows, and little farms and cottages sheltering among them, here and there, as far as the eye could reach. The blue sky and the strong upland wind were all about him, and he stepped out bravely down the long descent of the curving road.

On the slope of a hillside a mile away, flanked by ricks and barns and a dotted orchard, he could see a white house with a red roof, and he kept his eyes fixed on it as he strode down the broad hedgeless road, until he dropped into a furrow of the downs and lost it for a while.

But presently he came up to the house. It stood very pleasantly, its shoulder towards the sun now topping the hill which sheltered it from the keen easterly winds. A little river, crossed by a hand-bridge and widening below into a gravelly ford, ran between it and the road. Beyond the water was a grassy slope; and a long white paling with a little gate in the middle of it enclosed a garden which the flowers of early spring were already beginning to make gay. There were clumps of daffodils, many-coloured primroses, white arabis and yellow alyssum, modest hepatica and violets, and a shrub of daphne, whose pink flowers are braver than its leaves. Other plants, more lie-a-bed than these early heralds of colour, were pushing up strong tufts of green in the borders, and against the wide porch of the house a tree of japonica stained the white wall red.

But pleasanter to Pippin's eyes than these gathered signs of the happy spring was the house-door open, and, framed in the doorway, the figure of a girl looking across

the flowers and the grass and the brook to the white road along which he was coming.

This was his cousin Alison, whose grandfather had been cousin to his own,—Alison, whom he loved, not as a man loves his mistress, but as he loves the sister with whom he has laughed and played in his childhood, with perhaps a little love of another quality added, because they have not quarrelled so often.

She loved him too, whether as a brother or not she kept to herself, for women do not tell those things until they are asked. At any rate there was no more than sisterly regard in her kind brown eyes and on the full red lips of her mouth as she came down the brick path between the flower beds and through the gate to meet him.

She came down the grassy slope to the little bridge. The wind sliding down the hill caught the skirts of her dress and blew them about her straight young limbs. And it made tiny pennants of the looser locks that crowned her broad brow. A splendid type of budding womanhood she was as she leant against the slant of the wind, not caring for it at all. The flesh on her face was firm, and her soft skin seemed to glow with the warmth of sunlight. She had been bred in the sun and the wind; she was clean and sweet and supple; a girl to delight any man's eyes, even the eyes of a brother.

Pippin came on to the bridge to meet her, and they stood together leaning against the rail, in full view of the windows of the house. They had nothing to hide, neither lover's shame nor lover's sweetness.

"Alison!" cried Pippin. "I am so glad. Why are you up so early? Did you get up to say good-bye to me?"

She might have said that that was the last thing in her mind; that she had risen early for her own purposes, and had chanced to see him coming. Many girls would have said that. But it would not have been true, and Alison was very frank and truthful.

"I thought," she said, "that if you went away this morning you would go very early and by this road. So I sat at my window, and when I saw you at the top of the hill over there, I dressed and waited for you."

"That was like you, Alison," he said. "Of course I should come by this road—the road to the town—for I must get to know men and women. And I should start at dawn, so as not to lose a moment of my first day. You always understand."

She looked at him squarely, her eyes limpid and searching. "Do *they* understand?" she asked.

"My father does. He told me to go. He knows that every man must follow his desire, whether it keeps him at home or drives him out into the world."

"Yes; a man must follow his desire, but a woman must sit still and wait till hers comes to her."

"Why, Alison, how wise you have grown in a night! You did not talk like that when I told you of my plans only yesterday."

"Little shreds of wisdom often come to one in the night, Pippin. I suppose your mother took it hardly."

Pippin's honest face clouded, and he looked down at the running water. "Yes, she did," he said. "She is growing old—I never thought of it till yesterday—and she wants to keep me at her apron strings."

"Till the time comes when she wears none. It is the

way of mothers. You must not think too much of it, Pippin. You will have a merry time, in spite of your mother's tears."

He looked at her doubtfully. "You mean that I ought not to go," he said.

She looked away from him, with a flush on her cheek. "Oh, I don't know what I mean," she said. "If you must go, you must. It is not for me to blame you. But a man's 'must' often brings grief to a woman. Their ways are not the same."

His gaze rested on her, still doubtful. She met it, and her mood changed, April-wise. "That is all, dear Pippin," she said, smiling at him, though her eyes were a little moist. "I came out to wish you good luck and the best of journeys. I don't feel bitter about your going—not at all. You will come back and find us all just the same. And oh, how glad we shall be to see you!"

"I don't know that I ought to go after all," he said.

She gave a little clear laugh. "Of course you must go," she said. "I will not keep you a moment longer. See all that you can. Be kind to old people and poor people, and women and children; but I know you will be that. It is what you do for others that will teach you things, not what you do for yourself. There! That is another little piece of wisdom that came to me in the night. Take it with you, Pippin. It is the parting gift of your friend Alison."

Her eyes were more than a little moist now, and his were soft as he looked into her brave clear face. "I will remember that, dear Alison," he said gravely. "I need not go just yet," he added, as she held out her hands to him again with a gesture of farewell.

"Yes, go now," she said. "When you have something in front of you, don't linger. But tell me one thing. Was it only because this road leads to the town that you came by it this morning?"

"That was the reason," he said stupidly. "The other leads to the sea."

"Well, good-bye, Pippin," she said, with a little sigh, "and don't forget the people of your little world when you find the big one. We shall always be thinking of you."

So a second time he was bidden to fulfil his purpose, and at once. He went off long along the chalky road into the eye of the sun. Three times he turned back to look at her standing on the bridge with hand-shaded eyes. When he had topped the hill and waved her a last farewell, she turned too, and went up the grassy slope, through the little white gate, and along the brick path between the flower-beds into the house.

CHAPTER II

PIPPIN MEETS THE SHEPHERDS AND GOES TO BREAKFAST

On these rolling downs innumerable sheep were feeding. It was now the heart of the lambing season. The winds had been keen, but there had been little rain, and ewes and lambs alike were strong and healthy. Pippin's practised eye marked them with pleasure as they moved over the short grass in pairs, the big mothers with their load of fleece, and the little, white, long-legged lambs with their innocent faces, never far away from the source of their life.

The ewes would stand to look at him as he passed by on the road, bleating a warning message to their lambs if they should be more than a yard or two away; and the lambs would look up at him too, with more confidence, and, it really seemed, with some curiosity.

What was this tall creature with no wool on its body, moving along on that hard place where there was no grass, and never turning aside to crop any? No lamb, certainly, and if a grown sheep then a very poor sort of one, with none of the habits or qualities which made of a sheep the chief being in the universe. Useful, perhaps, if a lamb should find itself lying on its back in a deep rut and unable to move. Then a mother could do nothing but bleat, not even give a prod of the nose to help; but one of these rather suspicious-looking creatures would come along—they were always about with their long

crooks—and have you out in a trice, glad enough to have legs once more to get away from it as quickly as possible.

What! Those ridiculous-looking creatures, who couldn't even bleat properly, on a higher level than that of lambhood and sheephood? Nonsense!

What! Lambs brought into the world with immense care, and given great tracts of grass to eat and play over, so that their wool could afterwards be stolen from them to clothe these monsters, who could also kill the finest lamb that was ever born, without a tear of shame, and eat its flesh with as much pleasure as the lambs sucked the milk of the ewes? Absurd! If you feel merry, leap and skip among the daisies. Don't amuse yourself with such follies as those!

A little way from the road on a slope facing south was a large railed-in enclosure, and a shepherd's hut. Pippin stepped across the turf to give good morning to two shepherds who were standing over a wattled pen. They were the first men he had seen that morning, and it was an hour since he had said good-bye to Alison on the bridge.

The shepherds had taken a dead lamb from a ewe. Another ewe they had robbed of a twin day-old lamb. They had dressed the living lamb in the skin of the dead one, and the business in hand was to make the mother believe it was her own, and suckle it.

The poor creature, but a year old, and already a prey to the cares of motherhood, wanted her little one, but could not be sure that this was it. The lamb, troubled by no such doubts, ran after her, bleating piteously, a grotesque figure in its trailing cloak. She nosed it curiously and seemed to be half-satisfied, but when it poked its nose under her fleece in search of the desired suste-

nance she was off again, knocking it over as she went, with no trace of the care she would have shown to her own offspring. It was her own and not her own. She was seized alternately with a mother's anxious tenderness and a mother's terror of loss.

At last the men drove the lamb into the pen, and the ewe after it. They hemmed her in a corner and held her from moving while the lamb drew its nourishment, its forelegs doubled, its tail shaking with a frenzy of satisfaction. She stood quiet for a time and then broke away, but was driven back again. At last she stood quiet of her own accord and the lamb was fed.

"She'll take to it," said Pippin, leaning over the railing, as the sheep regained her freedom.

The shepherds moved away. One of them was old and bent and grizzled. The other was a lad.

"The first we've lost yet," said the boy. " 'Tis a good year."

The old man said nothing. He had trodden the downs, by day, and often by night, ever since his childhood, so long ago that he had forgotten what it was like to be young. He knew the ways of the weather, what was doing between the clouds and the winds, and what preparing in the starry hollows of the sky. He could tell the time better than a clock, and the day of the month, if not of the week. The faces of the sheep were as distinct and various to him as the faces of men. He knew every one of the thousands under his care. With his helpers he counted them over every day, and sometimes twice a day. He could not tell one letter or one figure from another, but he could count a flock of sheep, pouring in a huddled scurrying mass through a gate, infallibly. He was a

mine of curious lore, which he lacked the power to impart. He was immeasurably wise, and immeasurably ignorant. His shabby prick-eared dog, with its eye always on his gnarled face, was his familiar. He spoke to it by signs, and it would be off and away in obedience to a motion which a man could scarcely distinguish.

To men he spoke seldom. He did not speak to the hills and the sky, and they were his companions. They, and the sheep, spoke to him, and he heard them; but they spoke another tongue. His understanding of men's speech was rusted, by long years of solitude.

On the face of the youth the same stamp of taciturnity had already set its mark. But for him there was still a world apart from the silent world of the downs, whose silence he was slowly learning to be resonant with life, full of sound and movement to one whose ears were attuned to it. There were girls to love and boys to laugh with, games to be played, rare holidays, mighty meals to be devoured in good company, rough music, with dancing and kissing on the green. The world of striving men and women, laughing and crying, always hoping, always suffering disappointment, was still part of his world, and, on the threshold of that other world of silence and slow endurance, he could still find words to speak of it, still give a welcome to those who knew it not.

And yet the life of the ancient man who had outgrown the need of human companionship, of the youth whose face was set on that road, and of Pippin, eager for the life of strife and action, were of the same weft. All must set out to know; and the old man, whose deep knowledge was not of books, nor taught of men, but of the secrets of nature, had fulfilled his being in a way not given to

many. For his knowledge was locked up in his mind and would die with him, but who could say that it would die utterly in the sum of things, since God's pleasure it is to be prodigal, and yet to waste nothing.

There was a shout behind them, and Pippin turned to see the master of the farm coming across the turf. He was a tall powerful man, straight and free-moving. The hair under his felt hat was slightly grey, his face was weathered to a ruddy tan, and two rows of very white teeth gleamed in the midst of it. He might have been forty years old, or ten years older than that, or even ten years younger. Such men as he age so slowly that they seem to stand still. They take up their manhood when their beards begin to sprout, and hold it, almost unchanging, until suddenly they are old men; and their age, too, they hold so lightly that, suddenly again, they are broken up and laid aside until the end comes. Their life is the same at seventy as at twenty, and but for their children and afterwards their grandchildren growing up around them they would be almost without signs to mark the passage of the years.

There was no taciturnity about this farmer. He was a very hearty talkative man, glad enough to exchange words with a stranger and give his tongue the exercise that it sometimes lacked on these bare uplands. He eyed Pippin in a friendly manner as he gave him good morning, and asked where he had come from.

"Ah!" he said, when he had received an answer, "that is a country I was never in, though I have heard my father talk of the wonder of its trees of fruit. But he has been dead these thirty years, and was always a bit of a gad-about, the good old man."

Pippin's home was but nine miles off by the winding road, but the steep hills lay between that country and this, and they used different towns for their marketing.

The farmer took out of his coat pocket a big bottle on which a label announced that it held some man's celebrated sloe gin. But it had nothing stronger in it than warm gruel, which the farmer had fetched from his home for the sake of a ewe whom the pains of labour had well-nigh made an end of.

She stood in another wattled pen, her newly born twin lambs, bleating and uncared for, on the grass by her side. The farmer seized her muzzle in his hands and forced down her throat the strengthening medicine. She struggled half-heartedly, but presently she had swallowed it, and, its comfort running through her, began to tend her little ones, turning her attention first to one then to the other, patient of the double burden nature had laid upon her. It is so with mothers. They bear what is sent them and glory in their cares.

"Now you have had your breakfast, old gossip, we will go and have ours," said the farmer. He gave some directions to the two shepherds, and moved off again quickly, Pippin walking by his side. In that hospitable country a traveller becomes a guest with no bandying of words, and Pippin was glad enough to follow his host, for, though he had bread and meat in his pocket, breakfast is a meal at which warmer cheer is welcome, and one which is best eaten at a well-laid table. And he had been walking for over two hours, and was sharp-set.

On the other side of a ridge, half a mile away from the sheep folds lay the farmer's house of grey stone, with a steep roof of thatch. They approached it from behind,

and the grass ran right up to the door. What garden there was could not be seen from here, and the house looked bleak and windswept, though the deep thatch and the morning smoke gave promise of warmth and comfort within.

The promise was amply fulfilled, as the farmer, always talking, led the way into a great stone-flagged kitchen, of which the roof was hung with fat hams swathed in sacking, and the walls gleamed with polished metal. The farmer's wife, a stout comely woman with a smiling face, stood by a big table with a rough white cloth, upon which the dishes were already smoking; and round about it were ranged a family of children from twelve years of age downwards, boys and girls, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed, a pretty bunch of strong-growing human flowers, of which any parent might be proud.

"Here's a stranger, mother, come from the country over the hills, and been travelling on his own legs since the sun was up. He'll empty a plate quicker than you can fill it, I'll warrant; but there's enough for all, and if not, the children can go without for once."

A look of dismay spread itself over the smiling faces of the children, but gave way to open merriment as they took the jest, one after the other, the eldest boy leading, and the two-year old baby, clinging to its mother's skirt, closing the chorus. Life was a merry thing in this kind home, and with such a father, even for a two-year old, who could laugh at what others laughed at and need not trouble to find a reason for laughter beforehand.

Pippin took the baby and tossed it in his strong arms. They appeal to kindly youth, these little creatures, with their self-protecting confidence, and pretty unexpected

ways. The good wife beamed on him, and the older children took him at once into their fellowship. Presently he sat down to a great plateful of eggs and bacon and fried potatoes, with a hunk of home-made bread, well buttered, and steaming bowls of coffee; and for a time only the farmer's voice was heard, who seasoned all good things with talk, when there was anybody to listen to him, only ceasing when his head was on the pillow. Hard work, good food and sound sleep, with his wife to aid his welfare, and his children for playfellows: that was his life.

There was one child of the bunch, a little boy of perhaps five years old, who seemed to be his father's particular pet and plaything; for he sat beside him at the end of the table, plying a busy spoon, and every now and again the good man would look down at him and pass his hand over his smooth shaven poll. "The little priest," he called him. "A tiddy bit for my little priest," he would say, and put some dainty morsel on the little child's plate. And the child, who had indeed something of the solemn detached look of those who feed their minds on great mysteries, would take it gravely, and eat it, looking in front of him out of big, round eyes.

"Why do you call him the little priest?" asked Pippin presently, for, although with his more alert mind he saw some conformity in the name, he did not suppose that the child's father, whose understanding was little above that of a peasant, used it for any subtle reason.

There was a stir of expectation round the table. "What!" exclaimed the farmer. "Have you never heard of how I brought home the priest? Isn't that story told in your parts?"

"No," said Pippin. "I never heard it."

"Well," said the farmer, "it is plain that you live very much out of the world. But it is five years since it happened, and I should have thought it was common property by this time."

"Let me have it," said Pippin. "A good story carries a man far, and it is true that I have lived a good deal out of the world."

The farmer gathered together the fragments that remained on his plate and put them into his mouth. Then he drained his cup. And then he gave a great laugh. "I don't know that I can tell it as well as it deserves to be told," he said.

But it was plain, from the eager, grinning faces of children and the complacent smile of the good wife, that, in their opinion at least, half the merit of the story lay in his telling of it, and without further excuse he embarked on the tale of how he brought home the priest.

CHAPTER III

TELLING HOW THE FARMER BROUGHT HOME THE PRIEST

"You must know," said the farmer, laying his hand on the head of the child, "that when this little chap here was born, my good wife was very near leaving this world for a better one. All the others had come easy, and in the way of nature, and but for the lying up, and things at sixes and sevens in the house and about it, from the want of the mistress's eye, 'twas nothing but a warm welcome for another little one, and no trouble of it at all.

"Well, the wise woman was here in due time, who knows the road by which a child comes into the world as well as any, and an easy road it was to this house, as she told us. She was a merry soul and knew how to keep up a woman in what it is given to women to go through, both with cheering words and clever comforting ways. Food and drink she loved at the proper times, and stint of them was what she couldn't bear, though in houses where she knew living was hard she would share with the rest and no words about it. Everywhere she did her best—a good woman, and knew more about birth and death than most.

"There was no lack of the good cheer she loved in this house, and whether it was that she took too much pleasure in it, which I don't say, for it was not her habit when duty was to be done, or whether she was a trifle careless over what had always gone so well that you might say

there was little for her to do, or whether it just came so from none of her fault, I don't know, but about half past ten at night as I was sitting in front of this very fire, in that chair you see there, in she bounced with a white face and called out, 'You must go and fetch the doctor at once.'

"I was up out of the chair as quick as ever you saw. I won't say but what my eyes had been shut, for by nine o'clock I am used to be under the bedclothes; and, not looking for anything unusual, you understand, I was not as wrought up as you might say a good husband ought to be, with his wife in labour.

" 'Take a cart', she said, 'and bring the doctor back with you, drunk or sober,' and with that she was out of the room again, and had never so much as looked at what was spread out on the table for her, ready for when all should be over.

"By that I saw there was nothing to be done but go off as quick as might be. There was no love lost between the doctor and the wise woman. She took the bread out of his mouth, he said; but it wasn't bread he would ever complain of missing where there were strong spirits to be had, which it was the common talk he lived on, and could swallow as much in a day as would lay you or me up if we took a week over it. He's dead now, and I won't say he drank himself to death, because that wouldn't be right of a man who has gone where everything that can be said for him will be said. But if it wasn't so I don't know anything, nor the coroner's inquest either. But this I can say for him with a clear conscience: he was as good a doctor as any, and even when he was in liquor there was few to beat him for quickness and cleverness. So he was

much thought of, in spite of his weakness, and he had a way with him too that you couldn't help but look over it. There's no man but has his fault, and you've no call to be harder on another's than you are on your own.

"I put to the mare in double quick time, and felt lower in spirit every strap I buckled. But that I needn't talk of, nor of what I thought as I drove off over the hill on a wild snowy night. I wished half a dozen times I had gone up to have a look at the good wife there, and said good-bye, in case it was too late to say it when I came back. But then, again, I thought I might have wasted a minute or two, and life and death sometimes hangs on a minute. And with that I hurried up the mare and pushed on in the teeth of the wind.

"I was doubtful how the doctor might take it, to be asked to come out a matter of five or six miles, and on such a night. I'd never had him in my house since my old mother died, ten years before, and he might say, 'Where you don't want me I don't want you.' And I knew that he didn't like being fetched out of a night at all, not even in the town, for he would sit over the bottle, with one or two more like himself, very often, and then it was 'home's best,' the same as with many more who are free of his habits. But come he should, like it or not—that I made up my mind to, as, the mare and me, we battled against the wind.

"I reached the town at last, where there was some shelter, and we clattered over the stones between the lamps at a good pace till we came to the doctor's house. It was a big, old house, right on the street. I let the mare stand, for she wouldn't budge till I gave her the word, and rang the bell pretty loud. I rang it twice

more before they opened the door to me, and I didn't leave much time between the ringings. But as I waited I saw I had come at a bad time, for the two windows of the dining-room, which was on the left as you went in, were all lighted up, and by the noise that came from behind them I knew that the doctor was drinking with some of his cronies, and they had got very far into their cups as well might be, for it was nigh upon midnight.

"So I made up my mind what to do. I went back to the cart and got a thick sack that I had wrapped round my feet, and when I had rung again and was let in I was ready.

"The doctor's old servant opened the door. She had her hand to her side and her face was frightened. She said something, though what it was I took no notice of at the time, for directly the door was opened I pushed past her into the hall, and opened the door of the room where I knew I should find her master.

"As I got into the house the noise seemed to swell double, and the moment I was inside the room, if you'll believe me, there was a crash and the light went out.

"I didn't get more than a glimpse, but I saw half a dozen men maybe, round the table, some of them standing up, as if they were quarrelling. One had got a bottle in his hand and was swinging it over his head, and just as I came in he struck the lamp over the table, and out it went, as I said.

"Of course there was a flurry, and everybody talking at once; but I had no time to busy myself over their drunken quarrels. I had seen the doctor standing up by the table, and not so drunk as he might have been. So I went up to him in the darkness and caught hold of his

arm and said, 'Come out of this at once, doctor, 'tis a matter of life and death, and there's a cart and a good horse outside.'

"He pulled his arm free, but I wasn't going to let him go like that, so I made for him again and seized hold of him more firm—I could see a trifle then from the light through the crack of the door, which had pushed to behind me. 'Not another minute will I stay in this wicked house,' he said, and some more that I didn't take hold of. 'No more you shall, doctor,' says I, thinking he was far gone in drink so to miscall his home. 'Come quickly now and leave the rest to fight it out between them'; for fighting there was in the dark, and such a hubbub as never was with it all.

"Well, to make an end of it, as he didn't seem willing to come quietly, I slipped the sack over his head, and taking him in my arms, for I was a big man and he was a little one, out I went with him through the hall and bundled him into the back of the cart. The servant had gone off, frightened very like, and left the street door open, or I shouldn't have got him out as easy as I did, for he struggled like a madman, and I had to keep his head jammed up against my shoulder to stop him shouting.

"He didn't let out more than one shriek after I got him in the cart, for I tied my neck handkerchief round his mouth, as well as I could tell where it was through the sack, and passed a rope round his arms. Then I got up into the cart—the old mare had stood like a Christian through it all, just looking round once to see what sort of a squealing pig I was loading up with, as she thought—and off we went over the stones. Time enough too, for windows were going up all around us, and just as I turned

round and made off they were coming to the door of the doctor's house and shouting at me to stop.

"Little I cared for it all with what I had in front of me, and with the wind behind us we soon got into the open country and were travelling at near double the rate at which we came. I threw my own rug over my gentleman in the sack, for it was bitter cold, and 'You've come on an errand of mercy,' I said to him, 'and shall be as snug as I can make you.' He was still struggling a bit. 'Keep it up, doctor,' I said. 'It will drive the drink out of you, and when you have done what I've brought you to do—and please God it won't be too late to do it—you shall fill your belly with what you please.'

"I was lighter in my mind now, and it seemed no time before we were home again.

"I left the mare standing before the door and ran into the house. The wise woman had come down to meet me. Her face was quite different. 'A stout boy,' she said, 'and all as comfortable as can be.'

" 'Thank God,' I said, and all my troubles seemed to be behind me.

" 'Have you brought the doctor?' she asked. 'Little good he'll be, but if he's here he had better come up'; and she peered out of the door.

" 'I've got him here,' I said; and with that I went out and carried in the sack, and laid it tenderly in front of the fire.

" 'Lord save us!" said the wise woman, 'what's here?'

"I undid the rope and the handkerchief and pulled off the sack. The wise woman shrieked out, and as for me I fell back in my chair with my mouth open, so I believe,

and no power to utter a sound. *I had brought the wrong man!*"

The children round the table laughed in chorus at this crowning point, all except the one they called the little priest, and he played with his spoon and looked before him. Pippin laughed with them, and the farmer laughed louder than any.

"Yes," he went on. "When I thought to see the little drunken doctor getting up from the hearth rug, there was a little priest, as sober as you please, and a man that I had never set eyes on before, for we are not much in the way of priests here, and none had entered the house before to my knowledge.

"He was a little doubled-up ferrety fellow with red eyes, and he stared round on one side and another, blinking at the light, just like a ferret coming out of a rabbit-hole. He was near frightened to death too, I didn't blame him for that, he not being a man of courage to begin with, as I thought, and, for all he knew, tied up in a sack and driven off to be murdered.

"The wise woman ran to the table and poured out a glass of brandy. 'Twas the first thing she thought of. I helped him on to his feet, all shaking, and 'There's been a sad mistake, your reverence,' I said. 'I'm not one to throw scorn on a holy man, though his beliefs and mine are not the same.'

"He swallowed down the brandy, and some of his wits came back to him. I didn't wait for him to speak. 'My wife was in labour,' I said, 'and it was going hard with her. I set out to bring the doctor, willy nilly, and in his state I judged it best to put the invitation in a way he couldn't refuse. 'Twas the darkness and the fighting that

misled me, and you being in a house where such things were going on, I hope you will put the things out of your mind, for which I heartily beg your pardon.'

" 'I went into that house,' he said, 'which stands next to my own, to rebuke the drunkenness and the revelry, the doctor being a son of the church, though an erring one'; by which I saw that the priest had more courage than I had given him credit for.

" 'Quite right, your reverence,' I said. 'And if you will fall to over the food and drink that's on the table, late as it is, I will go out and look after the mare, and then when I have just stepped up to see how my good wife is going on, and the little chap that has been sent us, I will sit down and join you.'

"The wise woman had gone upstairs, and I took up the sack without further ado and went out to see to the mare, who had been standing quiet in the shelter of the house with a rug over her. When I had made her snug I came back, and there was the priest still in front of the fire and the victuals on the table untouched.

" 'Now do sit down and fall to,' I said to him. 'Punishment for wrong doing I'm not one to grizzle about, but that a man should refuse to take food and drink in my house, as good as I can offer him, that hits me hard. There's a deep bed of feathers upstairs all ready, and a roaring coal fire will be there by the time you have warmed yourself with the good cheer. And I will drive you back home myself in the morning, when you say the word. Forgive me my rough handling,' I said, 'and let's be friends.'

" 'I must have the child,' said he, peering up at me out of his little weak eyes, and taking no notice of my words.

"I stared at him, for I didn't know what he would be at.

" 'You owe me something,' he said, and that I wasn't denying. 'You are a heretic,' he said, 'and I'm not for troubling about you, at present. But the child I will have, to be baptised into the true church, and that is how you will pay me.'

"Well, I was taken aback, as you may think, but it was true that I owed him something, and if that was the way he chose to be paid for what he had suffered, I didn't know but what he would have to have his way. I wasn't so much set against his religion as some that I know of, so I didn't say no, though I didn't say yes. 'I'll go up and see my good wife,' I said, 'and afterwards we'll talk about it over a plate and a glass.'

"So I took off my boots and crept upstairs, and there was all as it should be, and touches a man's heart to see, the mother weak and worn with striving, but smiling and happy, and close to her the little tiny creature that knows nothing about it all yet, though the love that brought it into the world is wrapping it round. Ah, it gives the man something to think about, the birth of his child, and so you will know, young sir, when you grow older and beget children of your own.

"I didn't stay long, but kissed my wife and touched the little chap's cheek, and came down again to look after the priest, first seeing that all was right in the room where I hoped he would sleep sound after all he had put up with.

"Well, over our supper—and a hearty meal we both made of it—we struck the bargain, the priest and I. 'It is true I owe you something,' said I, 'for the way I have handled you, and you shall baptise the child into your church in due time, for one church is as good as another.'

" 'It is not,' he said. 'There is only one church, and I will baptise the child into that. But he must be brought up to know where he stands. I will see to that; for to this godless place I have just been sent, and here I will stay till I bring the truth to many homes.'

" 'That's as you please,' I said. 'The rest of us will stay where we are, parents and children, but this child you shall have the training of, for a bargain's a bargain, and I'm not the man to go back from mine.'

"So we settled it, and the priest supped well and slept warm, and I drove him back to his house the next day with the sack round his legs instead of over his head, and every now and again I laughed out loud at what was in my mind. And the priest said, 'Ay, you may laugh as you will. Your laughter pays for a soul saved from everlasting sorrow.' However, that's as may be.

"When the time came the baby was christened in the priest's church. A rare to-do it was too, and the good wife as pleased as she could be over it, though she never said as much."

The farmer's wife shook her head, but the smile on her face belied her action. She had her own sphere in life, and outside it whatever her husband did was right.

"There's no one more welcome in this house now," said the farmer, "than that brave little ferrety priest. All has turned out well, and *our* little priest here, so we call him, to keep in mind the merry tale, why he's as good as gold, and his reverence thinks so much of him that there's no telling what he won't make of him by and by. But to think it all came about from that—me catching hold of him and throwing a sack over his head and tying him up

and driving him home here, as innocent as a baby of what I was doing—why—!"

He ended in a burst of laughter, leaning back in his chair and throwing his eyes up to the ceiling. The rest all laughed in chorus, except the child over whom the bargain had been struck. He sat solemn, and his wide eyes gazed in front of him, like the eyes of one who has been initiated into some mystery, so that much of the laughter of the world goes by him as a thing of no account.

CHAPTER IV

PIPPIN FALLS IN WITH THE GENTLEMAN TRAMP

"Well, I must be getting back to the sheep," said the farmer, when breakfast was over, and Pippin said, "And I must get on to the road again."

The farmer had been so busy talking ever since they had met that he had asked Pippin nothing about himself, except whence he came. Now he looked at him with a trace of curiosity and asked where he was bound for.

"I am going to the big town," said Pippin, with a youthful blush; but the farmer spared him further questions, being more interested in himself and his own than in others.

"That is a place I was never in," he said. "In this house I was born and here I have lived all my life. Here, too, I expect to die when the time comes. Stick to your hearth, say I, if you have one to stick to. But some are not so fortunate."

Pippin thought over this as he took the road again, having bidden good-bye to his kindly host, who put him on the way, talking all the time of his own affairs, and to the good wife, who stood at the door to see him go, her rosy children gathered about her skirts.

"It is elderly men," he said, "that make so much of the home at their backs. For them, and for children who need protection, and for women, it is the best place, as I can see. But for my part I was very tired of it, and now, hurrah for the road again!"

Pippin now left the high down lands and dropped into a

well-wooded valley. The noble forest towards which his steps were tending, and through which he would have to journey on his way to the town, was still many miles distant; but in bygone years the whole of this country had been forest, and the trees and the fern and the woodland glades had stretched to the very escarpments of the chalk hills over which he had just come.

There were still left islands of uncleared land in the midst of all that had been tamed to support mankind. Pippin crossed a brown heath, dipping and rising, and more than once walked between ranks of great trees, and peered on either side into the recess of a deep wood.

But mostly the land was cultivated. Broad fields of ploughed earth were covered with a wash of green, where the seeds were sprouting, there were pastures in which fat kine were grazing, and untenanted hayfields. Farmsteads were frequent and the cottages of day-labourers, tiled or thatched, with low casement windows, each in its little plot of garden ground. And sometimes these cottages would gather together, and, huddling close, one to the other, would make a little village, in which there were shops and an inn, and, a little apart, an old church, with its schools and its parsonage. Pleasant villages they were, and warmed the traveller who passed through them with thoughts of home and á life of content and tranquillity.

Pippin, marching along the broad high road, sang aloud for joy. The sun was now high in the heavens, the blackbirds piped in the budding woods, the larks carolled above the meadows, and the strong clean April wind pushed the cloud argosies across the blue spaces of the sky. He had come to a country that was new to him, and he tasted the joy of his adventure. He was in the full tide of his youth-

ful vigour. His blood, stung by the spring, raced merrily through his veins, his bones were hard, his muscles like fine tempered steel. He felt as if he could walk for ever through the beautiful morning world. Anything might happen to him, and he was ready for anything that might happen. He could go where he would and do what he would, and there were none to say him nay. And, however much he might linger by the way, he had a purpose in front of him: to come at last to the great town, and see what manner of life was lived by those at the heart of the world.

At noon he stopped at a wayside inn to refresh himself and rest his limbs, for he had now been walking many hours, and, although his spirit was still strong within him and his mind set on motion, his body cried halt for the time and he was glad enough to obey it. These halts by the way are not the least pleasant part of such an excursion as his. Rest and refreshment for the body when it has willingly done its work are very sweet. But in idleness they lose their savour.

The inn stood by the roadside, away from other houses. A swinging sign, of the head of some great man or other, hung where its invitation could be plainly seen, and above the door was an inscription which showed that the landlord committed no illegal act in serving wayfarers with any kind of liquor they might want. A big trough underneath the sign held water for the horses, whose choice was limited and easily satisfied. Under the fall of the low eaves was a wooden bench and a rough table, upon which, when the weather was agreeable, men might sit with their glasses at hand and be entertained by talk and the pageant of the road.

The sun shone warm, and the wind which had blown so freshly across the downs was here felt only as a light breeze. Pippin went under the low door of the inn and ordered what he wanted, and presently the landlord brought it out to him—the half of a crusty loaf, cheese and butter, and clear ale in a tankard. He was a tun-bellied man, with a cheerful face, as a good landlord ought to be, who himself thrives on the food and drink he provides for others.

He asked Pippin where he had come from, and, when he was told, laughed and said that it was many years since he had walked so far in a day, although in his youth there were none to beat him.

"You wouldn't think, to look at me, that when I was your age I was as thin as a hop-pole, would you?" he said, and Pippin replied that he should not have suspected it.

"With some," said the landlord, "flesh comes year by year whether they eat and drink or whether they stint themselves. With others it don't come at all. That being so, eat and drink your fill, say I, and make the best of what's sent you." This dictum, suitable for a man of his calling, the landlord repeated twice, and then went indoors to look after his business. Pippin was left to his meal, which he enjoyed hugely.

By and by he saw coming along the road a curious figure of a man. He was dressed in a black coat that had still the remains of respectability, a very shabby pair of trousers, and a pair of boots so old that his toes peeped through them. He wore a straw hat that had once been white, and when he came closer Pippin saw that his shirt was clean and new, although no collar had been added to it.

Any tramp of the road might have been dressed thus, in the cast off clothes of more fortunate people; and the shirt he might have stolen. But this man, in spite of his attire, did not look like a tramp. He had a pointed white beard, beautifully trimmed, and his hands were slender, and quite clean. He was like a man of birth, masquerading as a vagabond, and he walked with the step of a gentleman of consequence, or as much so as his battered boots would allow.

"Now who and what is this?" said Pippin to himself as the man approached, and he shifted a little in his seat and made a motion with his plate, so as to shew that if he chose to take a seat by his side he would not be unwelcome.

The man seized upon the slight courtesy instantly, and magnified it into an invitation. He took off his scarecrow's hat with a flourish and said in a rather mincing voice: "I thank you most sincerely, young gentleman. I had intended to go on to the next village before I dined. But since you are so generous as to offer me your hospitality I will not refuse you." He looked at what was set before Pippin. "Bread and butter and cheese, a tankard of ale, and all of the best," he said. "It is a feast fit for a king, and I will willingly join you. Shall I call the landlord, or will you?"

"Well, I think you had better," replied Pippin, "if you want anything of him. I gave no invitation, and meant none, except that I was ready for your company if you chose to give it me." And he went on eating.

The man sat himself down on the seat beside him without a word. He looked straight in front of him, his thin hands resting on the crown of the stick between his knees.

When Pippin had eaten a few more mouthfuls and

drunk a big draught from his tankard he began to feel a trifle uneasy; but he saw that his companion was acting in this way for some purpose of his own, and determined that he would not be the first to speak. He stole a glance at the man's face, and could make very little of it. It was thin, but not, he thought, with the thinness of hunger. The well-kept beard, and the well-kept hands, seemed to show that he was not what his clothes betokened him to be; but of any sign of what he really was his face was empty. And at the moment it was quite expressionless.

Twice or thrice more Pippin stole a glance at him, and at last he intercepted a side-long look at his fast-emptying plate. It was withdrawn instantly, and had evidently been taken as it were against the will. But its meaning was unmistakeable. The man was hungry.

"Oh, come now," said young Pippin, good naturedly. "If you want a meal and can't pay for it, say so, and eat and drink at my expense. But I'm not to be caught with the sort of chaff you tried just now."

The man's attitude changed like magic. "My dear sir," he said, volubly, "I accept with the very greatest pleasure in the world, although I assure you that nothing was farther from my thoughts than to ask for your hospitality."

"There are more ways of asking than with the tongue," said Pippin, and he called the landlord.

"Hullo!" said mine host in the doorway. "Here's the Gentleman Tramp again! Why it must be a year or more since you were last on this beat." He grinned all over his broad face as he spoke, and Pippin understood that the gentility of his companion was not of the kind that claims respect.

"If you will kindly take the orders of my young friend here, and keep your clownish greetings for your own cronies, rustic George," said the traveller with unmoved assurance, "you shall have our further custom. If not you may go and drown yourself in a barrel of your own watery beer, and we will go where we can get better."

"Hark at him now!" said the landlord, greatly delighted. "It's his impudence that feeds him from one end of the land to the other. No more a gentleman than I am, and never did a hand's turn in his life! Well, he's got hold of you, young sir. What is it to be?"

Pippin gave his order, and the landlord, his fat sides shaking, went indoors to carry it out.

"These rustic boors," said the Gentleman Tramp, when they were left to themselves, "want keeping in their place. Because I choose the life of the road, which is the best life in the world, instead of growing old before my time between four walls, and because I choose to wear old and easy clothes, which are the best to travel in, every clown of them all thinks he may sharpen his clumsy wit on me. If this fellow provokes me any more, you shall hear me set him down."

He spoke with an air of great dignity, and Pippin eyed him askance, not knowing what to think. But, remembering the impudence of his greeting, and his side look at the food, he held his tongue and waited for what should follow.

The landlord came out with the fellow to Pippin's repast. He was still grinning. "Don't begin till you have put that inside you," he said. "You'll do it better. If you could manage to wait till the afternoon I would make it worth your while up to a pint or two. My old woman has gone to market, and it's a shame she should miss it."

"When your company is wanted, landlord, it will be asked for," said the Gentleman Tramp, applying himself with ill-disguised eagerness to his food. "I don't know what the world is coming to. Before I left my home to walk about the country, a man of your quality would have thought himself honoured to sit down with my servants. And if he had behaved himself as you do the meanest scullion of them all would have refused to eat with him. Go back to your pots and barrels, you toping pot-bellied oaf. You make the sweet air rank with your greasy presence."

This invective was uttered fluently but not with any passion, and its effect was somewhat marred by the movement of the speaker's jaws. The landlord maintained his expectant grin, but it was plain that he was not quite satisfied. "The invention's there," he said, "but it don't come right somehow. You eat and drink your fill, my man, and what the gentleman doesn't pay for I will. You'll do better after you've got through with your victuals."

"Before you relieve us of your presence, which we haven't asked for and don't want," said the Gentleman Tramp, "I should like to know what has become of that pair of boots I left with you the last time I passed this way. Presently you can bring them out and I will change these for them."

"Pair of boots!" echoed the landlord, looking down at the Gentleman Tramp's dusty disreputable feet. "You've made a mistake. Are you sure it wasn't a hat, now? I've got a pretty fair hat put by somewhere. I thought it was an old one of my own, but I may have been mistaken."

"Well, perhaps it was a hat. It was one or the other. Go and fetch out the hat, and I will see. The season is not quite ripe for the one I have on."

The landlord went inside with a wink at Pippin and returned with a hard felt hat, square in the crown, which the tramp took and looked at critically. It was old and well-worn, but it was a king of hats beside the one he had on.

"You have been wearing it yourself as I might have expected," he said as he tried it on. "Men of your class have no more conscience or honesty than a magpie. You would steal the plate off your grandfather's coffin when you opened his grave to bury your father. But I will take it, and you can have this one instead, which you can either wear to church on Sundays or hang up in your parlour and boast that it was given to you by a scholar and a gentleman." He handed his filthy straw to the landlord, who took it with a bow. "It has tiled in a deal of knavery," he said. " 'Twill serve for a boggart, and frighten off the crows better than most."

The encounter ended with some disappointment to Pippin and a good deal to the innkeeper, for the Gentleman Tramp now rose from his seat, saying to Pippin, "Follow me when you have settled with this low fellow," and went off down the road with his walk of a man of consequence.

"A rare rogue," said the landlord, looking after him. "But he gets older, and I doubt that he is losing some of his powers. When he can no more cozen honest men he will die in a ditch. The life of the road is a hard life, although those who live it scoff at those who work. You are travelling for pleasure, I take it, and could ride if you wished to." He cast a shrewd eye upon his guest.

"I like to go upon my own feet," said Pippin. "You see more, and I want to see all I can. I think the life of the road is a very good life."

"It is a very good life for a time if you have money, or a home to return to," said the landlord. "Well, you will get plenty of entertainment from my fine gentleman there. But be wary. He is a most amazing rascal."

Pippin thought that this was very likely the case, as he walked off down the road, some distance behind his late companion, who marched straight ahead without looking back; and he was in two minds as to whether he should not take a field path he saw just ahead of him and shake off the tramp altogether.

"I don't know whether he thinks I am going to run after him and catch him up for the pleasure of his company," he said to himself. "It would be like his impudence. Now, if he turns and waits for me before I get to that stile, I will perhaps go with him, for I shall get some fun out of him; and as for his rascality, I am old enough and strong enough to look after myself."

He came to the stile, and the tramp still marched on; but just as Pippin had his leg over the rail he looked round, and shouted at him. Pippin took no notice. "If he wants my company he can run for it now," he said.

The Gentleman Tramp, after shouting a little longer with no effect, broke through the hedge and came across the grass to intercept him. "What do you want to take this way for?" he asked angrily as he came up.

"Partly because I like a field path, and partly to rid myself of your company," replied Pippin.

The tramp eyed him askance. "The latter is very easily done," he said haughtily. "Why I, a man of birth

and breeding, am willing to burden myself with the society of a clodhopper like yourself is explained by the fact that it is my pleasure to welcome all sorts of company in the life I have chosen. But if you are not alive to the honour that is being done you you have only to say so, and you may go your own stupid way by yourself."

Pippin's temper had been rising during this speech. He turned round in the path. "I have said that I don't want your company as plainly as I can speak," he said. "Be off on your road, and I will keep to mine."

He turned and walked on; and the Gentleman Tramp followed in his footsteps.

So they went one behind the other, across a wide pasture, through a little wood, and into a narrow lane, and neither of them spoke till they had covered a mile. Then the Gentleman Tramp said in his high-pitched, mincing voice:

"When you said just now that you liked a by path for its own sake, you showed plainly that you were new to the road. You will never find those who know the life choosing any but the broad thoroughfares. Half the pleasure of tramping lies in what you see of men. You constantly fall in with new companions,—some good, some bad, but all of them interesting. If you slink along through fields and spinneys you meet nobody."

"Is that the reason why you were willing to burden yourself with the society of a clodhopper?" asked Pippin. He had recovered most of his good humour. His contempt for the man behind him and his absurd pretences was mixed with some pity. It troubled him to see a man of years dependent on a folly, and so ready to swallow a rebuff.

But it was not safe to grant an inch to the Gentleman Tramp, who now immediately stretched this one to an ell.

"That was the reason," he said calmly. "Your face is a fatuous one, and evidently conceals behind it the least possible allowance of brain. Also, you are so young and green that you cannot yet possess any of that shrewd philosophy which ignorant people sometimes gain who know the world. But—"

"But you have already got one meal out of me," Pippin broke in. "And you think that if you stick close to my heels and put up with rebuffs which no man of independence would take you may get more. To save disappointment I will tell you now that I do not like your ways, and shall be of no further service to you."

The Gentleman Tramp considered this. "My ways are those of a well-born gentleman," he said. "It is not to be supposed that you are familiar with them."

"Since they consist in sitting down to a meal as a man's guest and then vilifying him," returned Pippin, "I have no wish to be. Now let us understand each other." He turned round again—they were crossing a corn-field—and faced his follower. "You are perhaps a man of some gifts, but you put them to very bad use. I am willing to go with you as far as our roads lie together, but we will drop this impudent pretence of gentility. You ape the gentleman because you earn your bread by your merry-andrew tricks. But it is quite plain to me that you never were one, and I am tired of your folly."

The Gentleman Tramp laughed at him. "Lead on, fire-eater," he said. "You are a youth of some sense, after all. I think perhaps we may amuse one another for a time."

CHAPTER V

THE STORY OF THE GENTLEMAN TRAMP

The two now came out on to the high-road again, and walked side by side.

"I know what you are thinking," said the Gentleman Tramp presently. "You are wondering whether, after all, it is true that I have no pretensions to gentle birth."

"There is not much doubt about your pretensions," replied Pippin, with a smile. "They are loud enough to deafen one's ears."

"They have to be," said the other calmly. "I earn what little keeps me alive by pushing them. Do you think, if I really behaved like a gentleman, I should have got this hat, for instance, out of our friend the landlord? A very good hat it is too, for a man of my present station in life." He took it off and looked at it inside and out. "Though I wish it had been a pair of boots," he added. "These are very far gone, and to tell you the truth, the pace you are setting tries them almost beyond their legitimate powers."

Pippin immediately slackened his swinging stride. "If you are very much in need of a pair of boots," he blurted out, with the shame of youth in doing a generous action, "and you certainly seem to be—I hope you will let me make you a present of some when we get to the next town." He was half sorry when he had said it, for the man had bounced him out of a meal already, and had insulted him afterwards; and who was to say that this new quieter

manner was not simply another of his unscrupulous tricks?

The Gentleman Tramp may have suspected what was passing through his mind. At any rate he did not instantly pounce upon his offer, as he had done before. "For the first time for some years," he said, "I will give myself the pleasure of refusing a gift. With the ignorant clowns who pay me for entertaining them it suits me best to appear an impudent impostor. With you, to whose young and honest face I have taken a liking, I would rather have the credit of being what I really am in spite of all my follies. I will tell you my story if you would care to hear it."

"I should like nothing better," replied Pippin. "It will be the second story I have been told to-day; but to hear about the lives that men lead, and to see them for myself, is what I have come out into the world for. And your story should be something out of the common."

"It is a story of good opportunities wasted by folly," said the Gentleman Tramp, rather sadly. "That is not very uncommon, perhaps. But you shall hear it and see." He then embarked without further preface on

The Story of the Gentleman Tramp

I was born the elder son of a country gentleman of good lineage and fair estate. The house in which I was brought up, and which should now belong to me, was built by my grandfather's grandfather, who had made money in honest trade. That is good lineage as things go nowdays, and I assure you that for four generations none of my family had soiled his hands with trade, honest or otherwise. We had lived handsomely upon what the

founder of our house—I believe he tanned leather—had left behind him, taking money out of the land as befits a gentleman, but also putting in what was necessary to make it productive; and none were the worse for our good living through near two hundred years, but many, who worked for us, much the better.

The house stood in a park of fine trees. Whenever I think of it, which you may believe is not very often now, I think of the room in which I slept as a boy—a large, square room facing west. If I could sleep in that room once more before I die, I would—well, I think I would even undertake to drop my vagabond habits. I should like to see again the shadows of the trees draw along the thick grass at sunset, and the rooks follow one another across the evening sky.

There was a big window, from which a great deal could be seen. I slept with it wide open, so as not to lose a moment of each new day, in which there was so much to do and to see. Even now, when there is not quite so much, I would rather sleep where the sun will call me than under a roof. In my childhood, so many years ago, it was always my ambition to lie under the stars, and I remember the first time that I did so, in the boughs of a tree in my father's park where I had swung a hammock, and the trouble there was about it when I was missed in the morning.

I also remember vividly a room built on the wall at one of the gates. It was built after the French style and looked on to the road. There was a great plane-tree overshadowing it, standing on a patch of grass by the roadside. The lodge was on the other side of the gate. I was allowed to use this room to play in, and I sometimes stood

for hours at the window gazing out on to the road and the people who passed. I would have given a great deal to join them. My roving tendency was alive even in those early days. But the gate was kept locked, and I was not allowed to go through it.

Another memory that comes to me—but I try to keep it off—is the little old church in the park, where we all used to sit in a great square pew, my father, big, and, I must say, now that I know more of the world, rather pompous, and looking as if he thought that a good deal of what we went to church to do was in his own honour, as perhaps some of it was, for he was the most important man in the place by far, and most of those who stood and knelt there with us were dependent upon him; my mother very gentle and collected; and my little brother and I on either side of her; while the old man in the reading desk or the pulpit droned his way through the service, and we could see the birds flying to and fro through the clear glass of the east window.

I envied the birds their freedom during those hours of confinement, which were very irksome to me then. My head was full of plans for the open air, and that is perhaps why they come back to me, for it is thought and not action that stamps the memory, and a child seldom thinks when he can be doing. And there was the atmosphere of peace and protection, which strikes me now that I am getting older as a very delightful thing. With all its attractive qualities, the roving life is somewhat lacking in that atmosphere.

Well, childhood is soon over, and I will weary you with no further details about mine, which was a happy one, as I see now looking back upon it, although in those days,

like most children, I was anxious to be grown up, and my own master.

I was wild and troublesome from the first. A character such as mine is given to a man before he is born, most unfairly as I think, for it will plague him all his life, and, unless circumstances are very much in his favour, bring him very quickly to ruin. Nobody could have had a better upbringing than mine. My father was rather impatient and quick-tempered, but he was a kind and upright man and anxious to do his duty by the son who should succeed him. My mother was a good, gentle and very patient woman. She may have loved my younger brother better than she did me, but that is not to be wondered at, for he was rather frail in health, and a sweet child, clinging to her very shadow and never quite happy away from her. But she made no difference in her treatment of us, as far as she could help it; it was I who refused to be tied to her, and was impatient of her warnings, and even of her caresses. I was so abounding in life and spirits that I could not be still in the house for a moment, and even the wide bounds of my beautiful home were too narrow for me.

I suppose I was born without a conscience. If I had one it has never troubled me much, and runs a very bad second to worldly prudence in deterring me from any action which might bring unpleasant consequences. But I had so much of everything that I could possibly want in my young days that I was preserved from committing any grave fault, and until I was twelve years old and first went to school I had done nothing that the world would call bad.

But directly I got to school I found that what I had

considered the confinement of my home was blissful freedom compared with the discipline I now had to undergo. So I determined to run away, and did so without any delay.

I might not have been seriously blamed for this fault had I not stolen money with which to make my journey. This horrified my father, who was a man of strict honour. He gave me a very hearty thrashing and sent me back to school again, where I was, of course, a pariah among the masters and the other boys for what I had done. It was a mean and unpopular boy whose money I had taken, and he had plenty of it. Also he was paid back. But that did not prevent his being raised into a martyred hero, or me from being ill-treated.

So I ran away again, and having no money of my own and having learnt by bitter experience that it did not do to help myself to that of others, this time I walked, begging my way over the hundred miles or so that lay between the school and my home. It was my first taste of the freedom of the road, and I should have enjoyed it if it had not been for what awaited me when I came to the end of my journey.

I think it is a melting thing the way a child clings to his home and the thought of it. I remember, at that same school, a little boy who slept in the next bed to mine. His mother had died when he was born and his father hated him for it, but he cried himself to sleep every night out of longing for his home, such as it was. So I at that time made for my father's house. I did not know what he would do to me, and I feared the worst; but my mother was there, and I should sleep again in my own familiar room.

I got another sound thrashing, but I was not sent back to school again. Indeed, they refused to take me, and I was taught at home for a year, always under the displeasure of my father, who could not forget that I had been a thief, nor let me forget it. Here I think he was wrong, but I will not blame him, for it would have been impossible for him to steal, and he was unable to understand that if he had forgiven me my fault and said no more about it I should have been ashamed, instead of irritated, and might better have grasped the merits of honesty.

At any rate I was glad enough a year later to leave home for school again. I was sent to—but I will not tell you the name of the school. It was an ancient and royal foundation, and I have reflected little credit on it. I sometimes come across old school fellows filling places of honour. More than once I have been committed to prison by men I have played and worked with, for vagrancy or some such offence, but I have not made myself known to them. They were, as far as I could see, quite sufficiently pleased with themselves and the part they played in the world, and it would have been harmful for their souls if they had been allowed to compare the heights to which their good conduct had brought them with the depths to which I, their one time companion, had sunk. Besides, they would have thought it necessary to moralize, and I dislike above most men your moralizing magistrate. To my mind he cuts a poor figure beside the prisoner, who is ready to take his punishment when he shall be allowed, while the man who has condemned him to it will go home to be surrounded by every possible inducement to prudence.

I did not want to run away from the big school. I enjoyed my life there. My early peccadillo was not known, and I started on fair terms with masters and boys. The good opinion of the former I did not retain for long. I was idle and troublesome. But that did not damage me with my school fellows, except perhaps the best of them, with whom I did not consort. I stayed there for five years without getting into very serious trouble, learning because I could not help it a little of what I had been sent there to learn, and a good deal of what I had not.

Then I went to the University, with a good allowance, which, however, was not nearly large enough to compass the many new desires which I instantly began to form. I must have horses to ride, and others to gamble over, wine and merriment, women, cards, expensive clothes and jewelry, and all the toys with which the ill-regulated mind of youth seeks to engage itself, when present pleasure is everything and future advantage a thing to scoff at. The old Latin poet—fragments of whose wisdom still cling to me—has described such a one as I was in my beardless youth:—wax to the bent of vice, impatient of those who would have crossed me, slow to lay up useful treasure, prodigal of money, aspiring and greedy—and the rest of it.

It seems to me that, knowing me as he did, my father was wrong to send me to the University at all. It is a bad place for the sons of rich men, with vicious inclinations. The small measure of discipline, which is enough for the well-regulated, hardly more than whets the appetite of those of my kidney. Opportunities for running into debt are almost unlimited, and indeed pushed at you.

You are doing no useful work, for your future prospects do not depend upon how you acquit yourself, as is the case with those who have no expectation of wealth beyond what they earn for themselves. You consort with those who are situated like yourself, or who, to their undoing, would like to be. You have companions to aid and abet you in whatever folly you take in hand. And if you manage to scrape through your three or four years without falling into disgrace, you go away that much older than you came and no better fitted to face the life that lies in front of you.

I need not say that with my inclinations, and the lack of conscience with which I have already charged myself, I was not long in such a place before I fell into disgrace. When I had been there a year I was enormously in debt, but had committed no flagrant fault. The debts were of such a sort that I had to disclose them to my father. He paid them in full, and I am glad to remember now that I proposed to him that I should not go back to the University but should do something in the way of actual work instead. Whether I should have been saved, if he had consented, from the ruin that afterwards fell on me I am not quite sure. Further follies I should no doubt have committed, but with something in life to occupy me they might not have been so serious, and in time I should have woke up to to the value of what I should be throwing away if I persisted in them. At any rate I had that much grace in me that, whitewashed as I was by my father's generosity, I did not want to walk back straight into temptation, although my gratitude did not carry me so far

as to resist very vigorously when the opportunity for wrongdoing again occured.

My father had gone through his own University course with some credit, and his father before him, so he shut his eyes to what was likely to happen, and told me that I must go back and reform in the very place where reformation was most difficult. I said good-bye to my mother, who was very tender with me, and to my younger brother, who was all that I ought to have been, and was very fond of me, though I did not deserve it, and drove away from my home in an easy frame of mind. If I had but known it, I had crossed its threshold for the last time.

With a very short interval I plunged again into the courses which had already brought me to grief, and if anything with increased extravagance, for I now had to find pleasure to drown the sense of wrongdoing which had to some extent arisen in me, as well as to satisfy my naturally voracious appetite. I gambled, among other things, more wildly than ever. At first it was mildly, and you might say within my rights, for I did not succumb altogether without a struggle. And unfortunately I won, continuously and for some time. That spurred me on, and of course there came a time when I lost very heavily. I had no means of paying a big debt, and I could not go to my father again. At least I thought I could not. I believe if I had and he had treated me with forbearance—it would all have depended upon that —I might have reformed from that time. The first check had been too easily surmounted, but now I was frightened of myself, and for the time, at least, sick of my follies.

But my fright drove me to the last ruinous one. I forged my father's name to a cheque, and immediately I had paid my debt with it woke up to what I had done, and ran away.

You may believe that this time I did not make for my home. What I did was to walk straight out of my rooms with a walking-stick, and nothing else but what I stood up in, and what was in my pockets. I had a favourite spaniel, which I had brought from home, and of course, he wanted to come with me; but I was out of the mood for his gambols, and I locked him in. I really did not know at that time whether I was going away for good or should come back after a long walk in the country. I made no plans at all, but obeyed the instinct to get away from my troubles.

But as I walked, for hour after hour straight on, I know not where, except that it was in the opposite direction to that in which my home lay, I woke up to the fact that I was in flight, and that although I had not known it had been flight from the moment I took up my hat and stick. Having once realised that, you will find it difficult to believe that my spirits rose with a bound; but it was so. I had wiped all the past away from me, and had leapt into a state of absolute freedom. The prospect of walking through the country—it was in the spring, rather later than it is now—with nothing and nobody to bind me, was delightful. I had enough money for my immediate purposes, and as I had never known the want of it, as far as the necessities and most of the legitimate luxuries of life were concerned, and had never been used to looking forward, it did not trouble me much that there would come a time when what I had should

be exhausted. Tired as I was, I shouted up to the evening sky, and I believe I cut a caper in the road.

You may see here, if you like, nothing but the evil of my nature, but also, if it please you to be generous, some little spice of good. On the one hand all the sorrow and dishonour I was bringing on those who loved me was nothing, because I myself had escaped them, and my own dishonesty was nothing; on the other hand my pleasure at the prospect of a life in the open air, devoid of all the accessories and excitements of wealth, showed that I had in me tastes which if they had been properly cultivated might have outbalanced the impulse to excess which had brought me down. However, it had lain with me if anybody to cultivate them, and I had not done so. And no doubt you will say that the evil far outweighed the small amount of good.

At any rate, the idea of what might be called a prolonged walking tour did immensely exhilarate me at the time; although if I had foreseen that it would last practically until the present day, my joy might have been somewhat dashed.

I ate and drank at an inn on the road, and walked on afterwards into the night. Then I lay down to rest in the loose hay under the shelter of a stack. I was very tired, for I had walked above thirty miles, but I could not go to sleep at once. My thoughts were melancholy now. I realized that I had cut myself off from the love of home, and even from the companionship of my fellows. And one of the causes of my downfall had been that I set great store by companionship.

As I lay looking up at the stars, comfortable enough in body in my warm nest, but rather sad at heart, I

heard a scuffling noise near me in the stillness of the night. I sat up instantly, in alarm, and found myself overwhelmed by the joyful caresses of my dog. He must have got out of my room on the first opportunity, but how he had succeeded in tracking me all those miles is one of those wonders of animal intelligence which cannot be explained. He soon snuggled down by my side and I was pleased enough to have him with me, now that my loneliness was beginning to be apparent. Here was at least one creature in the world who loved me, and would still have loved me if I had been twice as bad as I was. My melancholy disappeared and I slept sweetly throughout the night.

As long as my money lasted, and afterwards the proceeds of my jewelry, which I sold, I kept going, sometimes walking a prodigious number of miles in a day, sometimes idling in a place that suited me. I was quite happy. I suppose I was much in the same position as I take you to be in now, a young man in the full tide of his strength and energy who travels for his pleasure and interests himself in everything and everybody he sees, having enough to pay for food and drink, and a bed if he wants one, and asking nothing more of life for the time being. I was so entranced with the freedom and the change of my life that even if I had gone back after the first few months of it to my proper station, I think I must always have broken away every now and then to tramp the country. I found the people whom I met on the road and in the wayside inns every bit as interesting as my old companions, and when my appearance as a gentleman had somewhat altered, and they took me more readily into their company, there were roaring

times of good fellowship, and a vagabond life which was not always overclean, but to which I adapted myself quite readily.

My wants were so few that even with what I spent on others, for I was still prodigal of my money as long as I had any, I did not become destitute until the summer had gone by. By this time I had sunk pretty low. I had fallen sheer from a class somewhere near the top, to one at the bottom of the tree. Partly from youthful bravado, partly through circumstances, I had made my companions of the vagabonds who are beneath the ordered ranks of society, and boasted that they were as good and far more amusing fellows than those above them in the social scale. So they were as long as I was a sort of king among them, with money in my dirty pockets and no great disinclination to part with it. As soon as I was brought down to live on my wits like the rest of them, I found them much the same as any one else, more interested in their own affairs than in mine, though there were good fellows among them.

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY OF THE GENTLEMAN TRAMP (*continued*)

And now having wasted my substance and having found a diet of husks little to my liking, my thoughts, like those of that other prodigal, began to turn to my father's house. I knew what hunger was, and cold, for my summer suit was thin and worn out, and I had no money to buy warmer clothes. I would tramp home, confess my faults, which had long since become patent, be forgiven, and take up my position again as a rich man's heir, having spent an agreeable summer in seeing something of that side of the world which is mostly hidden from men of my birth.

It was a pretty programme, but it did not work out quite as I had anticipated.

It was my little brown dog who upset my plans. He had been my constant companion throughout the summer and I had congratulated myself a thousand times on his cleverness in finding me, though, perhaps, I ought rather to have congratulated him. I had come to a place I knew very well, about twelve miles from my father's house. I had intended to reach home that evening, but I had been making forced marches on insufficient food, and my boots had given out, and I came to anchor for the night in a larch plantation on the edge of a big covert, intending to push on early in the morning, get over the troublesome business of penitence and reinstatement, and sit down to a good breakfast in a clean suit

of clothes. I had had enough of a roving life for the present and I looked forward with keen delight to the morrow as I lay under the stars, thinking hardly at all of the preliminaries which I should have to go through before I got everything that I wanted.

But I was very hungry, so hungry that I could not sleep for it. I could hear the pheasants stirring on the boughs above me, and presently I said to myself that I must have one of them. I knew the man to whom they belonged very well,—I had often shot with him over this very covert—and I did not suppose he would grudge me one fat cock out of them all, even though the time had not come to kill them legitimately. We would even have a joke about it later on, when I had settled down to the blameless life of a country gentleman, as I now meant to do. Besides I was hungry and there was food for the taking, and I did not really trouble either about him or the law.

It was not difficult to bring down a bird with a stone; I hit an old cock at the first try, but he was only wounded, I think in the wing, not killed, and when he came to the ground he ran way, and my dog, delighted at the sport, after him. Then there was a flash and a loud report. My dog was killed, and I was struggling fiercely with my hands at the throat of the man who had done it, while another was beating me about the head with a stick.

They soon had me senseless and bound, and when I came to myself I was in the lock-up with a doctor attending my wounds. They were not serious and he soon had my head bound up. I knew him, but I could see that he had not the slightest idea of who I was, and something made me hold my peace for the present. I was as dirty

and unkempt as any tramp of the road, and I had grown a beard during my summer wanderings.

I was brought before the magistrates the next morning and my father was on the bench. He knew me the instant I was brought in, and his face went white. But he made no other sign, and allowed the proceedings to go on to the end. The man of whom I had thought to borrow a supper was also on the bench, and he was an angry man. I had trespassed on his land, I had tried to kill one of his pheasants, and I had maltreated his servant. So he did everything he could, short of an open scandal, to play prosecutor as well as judge, and as there was no doubt at all about the facts of the case, and I had nothing to say in my defence, my punishment was made as heavy as the magistrates were allowed to make it.

The idea of spending some months in prison disturbed me a good deal more in those days than it would now. In fact I could not believe that it would happen. My father had sat on the bench throughout the proceedings without a word, and he had silently acquiesced in the rather ferocious sentence. "He must be turning over a means of getting me free," said I to myself, and, as he evidently and naturally did not want any one to recognize me, I assisted his cogitations by being careful to speak as little as possible, and then in a feigned voice. When I was taken away out of the room he did not look at me. "He will do something now," I thought.

But it seemed that I had mistaken his intentions. I served my time in prison without once hearing of him, and my feelings towards him were the reverse of filial. But, partly out of shame, and partly because I still hoped

to take what I thought my proper place in the world, and did not want to do so under such a stigma as I had incurred, I did not disclose my identity, and nobody guessed it during all those horrible months.

At last, when my time of release was drawing near, my father came to see me. I was ashamed, but my resentment was stronger than my shame, and I reproached him bitterly for not lifting a hand to save me. He listened to what I had to say coldly, with a look of such steady aversion as brought my angry speech to a rather tame conclusion.

"If you have quite finished what you have to say," he said, "I will speak," and then without any waste of words he told me that he had disinherited me in favour of my brother, and that if I ever attempted to enter his house again I should be arrested for forgery.

This was such a stunning blow that I could only sit and look at him with my mouth open. He then went on to say that when I went out of prison I should find five pounds in the hands of the prison chaplain, with which if I cared I could make a new start in life. If in a year from that time I wrote and told him that I was earning an honest living—he did not mind in what capacity—and he satisfied himself that I was speaking the truth, he would help me further, although he would never see me again. If I preferred to waste the five pounds in what he called riotous living it was all one to him.

I saw that this was so. He had lost all trace of fatherly feeling towards me, and only looked at me with contempt and dislike, for he kept his eyes on me all the time he was speaking.

His attitude goaded me into renewed resentment.

"You want to cast me off altogether," I cried. "You don't care whether I reform or not."

"I don't believe you can reform," he said at once. "And if you press me, no, I don't care."

The cold brutality of this speech struck me anew. There was something about my father, stern as he had always been, that I did not recognize. "Doesn't my mother care?" I said, bitterly, and struck him unawares.

He seemed to shrink into himself and his face went white. "Your mother is dead," he said, and then he went away.

Well, that was my start in life, my real start, for what had gone before had been only play. When I came out of prison I was in a state of extreme misery and desperation, and I strove to mend it in the way taught me by the lowest of my late companions, and with the help of my father's five pounds.

I am not a born drinker, or I should no doubt have been in my grave by this time. I drink when I can, and leave off when I have had enough. I soon grew tired of that poor form of consolation, which is none to a man of my temperament. I bought a new suit of clothes and took to the road again. After my time in prison freedom was enough for me. I had neither the inclination nor I think the capacity to follow my father's suggestion and to try and regain something of what I had lost by steady work. What could I work at, brought up as I had been? I was of use neither for the posts by which educated men earn their bread, nor for manual labour. Besides, I hated my father so at that time—I have forgiven him

now—that to merit his approval was no spur to effort, and the date at which I would get more money from him was so far distant that I put the thought of it aside for the time.

Well, you will say that I had had enough of the fruits of vicious idleness to have made me turn from it to any other course. But it was not so. I was a different man in some ways, but I was not a better one, and many of my old inclinations survived the shock I had undergone. I had been a vagabond half in play. Now I was a vagabond in earnest, and I have been so ever since, for something like forty years.

There are degrees in vagabondage. I am not altogether a rascal. I am the Gentleman Tramp, and the name fits me better than those who gave it me imagine. I have tastes which are not shared by my companions of the road, and I believe that some of the better ones have been brought out by my way of life, as they would not have been if I had lived in the ease and luxury to which I was born.

At first I wanted money—more money than I see now to be necessary to a man who throws himself daily upon circumstance. And as there was no way of earning it that I cared to trouble myself about, I got it, as they say, by my wits. The race-course, about which I knew a good deal for a man of my age, seemed to afford the easiest opportunity, and for some time I was a diligent frequenter of race-courses, which I got to know better from the under-side than I had known them from the upper. But I got tired of that life, and the contrast between myself as I was and myself as I had been was painful. Besides I was recognized more than once by

my former companions, and that was more painful still. If I had lost my hold on the old life I had not yet lost hold of it so long as to make me indifferent to the change; to my old friends I must have seemed a proper blackguard, and they showed me in various ways that they thought so.

When I think of my own character as exemplified in those early years I confess that it interests me profoundly, as I hope it does you. I believe that my early transgressions were nothing worse than the sowing of a rather noxious species of wild oats, for which I was punished unduly. I was dishonest, but so are most people in one way or another, only they learn to hide it. They pray to Janus and Apollo out loud, and whisper a prayer to Laverna in secret—you are probably not scholar enough to understand the illusion. I should never have committed a stupid dishonesty again if I had got over that bad fence of the forgery. I have said that I never had any real taste for drink. The race-course, which had been partly responsible for my downfall, sickened me quite early, as no doubt it would have done if I had gone on seeing it from the roof of a drag instead of from amongst the wheels. I grew tired of greasy packs of cards as I should have done of clean ones. Yes, all these things, even dishonesty, which many estimable and highly considered gentlemen practise all through their lives, were so far from my real tastes, that I did not want them even in moderation after I had fleshed my youthful teeth on them; and having given them up what did I do? I took to the road.

I had been trained for the life of a country gentleman. Supposing my youth had been exemplary, what

should I have done after I left the University? I should have spent as much of my time as possible, winter and summer, in the open air, earning health, appetite, and sound sleep; and the more entirely I had devoted myself to field sports, the more I should have been thought of by everybody around me, especially my father. Very well then; in esssence that is exactly what I did do. I had sown my wild oats, and settled down—to the life of the road.

I took it seriously, as I should have taken the other. I tramped the country winter and summer. I had no money, and I went without. I went without every other bodily luxury that varies the life of the most ardent wealthy sportsman. I never looked forward, but lived for each day as it came. And so does he. I did no useful work, and he does, or need do, none. I suffered hardships of necessity, as he does voluntarily; only he has ease to salt them and I had none, only liberty, which perhaps is better. I say that my life, take it day by day, has more merit in it than his, and that having sown my wild oats, if I had not been forced to reap them with such disconcerting rapidity, I should have been all that my parents or any one else could have desired me to be.

This high pride with which the Gentleman Tramp ended the story of his fall from place and fortune differed so greatly from the melancholy confession with which he had begun it, and was so at variance with much of what he had cynically charged himself with during its recital, that Pippin, who was no fool, though he was young and generous, was not quite convinced by it. And the story was hardly finished. But it had taken a long time to

tell, and they had now come into the streets of a thriving little town.

"I am quite ready for a meal," said Pippin, "and I hope you will eat with me. And there are the boots to see to."

"The meal I accept," replied the other. "I have earned it by the entertainment I have given you. The boots I will get for myself, and you shall see how."

They walked on a little further, and the tramp led the way down a steep side lane to where an old man in a leather apron sat on a bench in a low doorway, cobbling a pair of shoes, and whistling cheerfully the while. He had white hair, and a large pair of spectacles on his nose. A parrot in a wicker cage chattered volubly by his side, but ceased when the strangers appeared, to eye them suspiciously, his head cocked, muttering every now and then a reminder of his own beauty. There were geraniums in pots on the window-sill, and everything inside the room was clean but very poor.

"Look at these boots," said the Gentleman Tramp in a loud and confident voice, very different from that in which he had been telling Pippin his story. "I bought them off you the last time I was in this town, and I vowed that I would wear them till I came here again to show you what sort of handiwork you fobbed off on me."

The old man examined the boots closely, peering through his round spectacles, and then looked up at their owner. The black coat and the respectable hat, and the voice of command, outweighed the signs of mendicancy, which he was perhaps not keen-sighted enough to notice. "They have certainly had a great deal of wear, sir," he

began, but the tramp interrupted him. "Do you deny that you sold them to me?" he asked.

The old cobbler could neither deny nor affirm. He said he did not remember. "But if you say so, I suppose I did," he said.

"Very well, then. You must give me another pair, and I will say no more about it. But you ought to be ashamed of yourself for trying to take in a gentleman in that way."

The old cobbler's face fell. "I don't think, sir—" he began; but here Pippin, who had been listening with rising indignation, broke in.

"Give him another pair and I will pay for them," he said.

"Generously said," said the Gentleman Tramp, "but I shall not allow my young friend to be cheated out of his money, as I have been. I demand a new pair of boots by right."

"You will either take what I offer you or go without," said Pippin firmly. "Don't force me to say more before this old man."

He faced him squarely. He was very angry; and the tramp, after a further look into his eyes, knuckled under. "You hear what the gentleman says," he said sulkily to the cobbler, and the old man, delighted at the turn the affair had taken, brought out a rough but strong pair of boots for which Pippin paid him a small sum.

The Gentleman Tramp put on the boots and he and Pippin walked away in silence, pursued by derisive hoots from the now reassured parrot.

When they came to the main street Pippin halted and said: "I think we will part here. I will give you money

for the supper I promised you, but I want your company no longer."

"Oh, come now," said the tramp. "You know my way of getting what I want."

"Yes, and I call it a dirty way," replied Pippin, hotly. "As long as you exercise your buffoonery on such men as the innkeeper, who is willing to be imposed on, I have nothing to say. But to rob a man as poor as that old cobbler is a different thing, and shows that all you have been saying is not to be trusted. I will have nothing more to do with you."

By this time the rudiments of a crowd, attracted by Pippin's honest wrath, had begun to gather. "Oh, very well," said the tramp, with his head in the air. "You and your supper may go hang," and he walked off loftily without turning his head.

Pippin, after a short pause, walked off in the opposite direction, relieved to be rid of so undesirable a companion, but rather sorry that he had not heard more of his story, which had kept him interested throughout the afternoon's walk.

CHAPTER VII

PIPPIN MEETS A POOR SHOPKEEPER AND SOME RICH ONES

Pippin found a modest inn and asked if he could have a bed for the night and a meal at once.

He was told that he might have both if he could be content with a dish of bacon and eggs for his supper, and would share a room with another traveller.

As to the first, he said that the proposed dish would do as well as any other if it were big enough, and as to the second, he would like to know who his room fellow was to be before deciding.

"I will not deceive you," said the landlady. "He is a travelling pedlar; but a very sober, honest man. He lies here every time he comes this way, and I would not turn him out if you were to fall down to me on bended knee."

"Many a man would be glad enough to do that," said Pippin gallantly. For the landlady was a very personable woman, and had a twinkle lurking in her eye which betrayed her willingness to accept a pleasantry.

"Go along with you," she said, in high good humour, "or I'll call John with a stick." And then she laughed, shaking from the chest upwards as full-favoured women do, and a merry laugh it was. "Well, will you take the bed?" she asked.

Pippin said that he would, and went upstairs to wash the dust off him while his supper was being prepared.

There was no sign as yet of the pedlar, who was perhaps replenishing his pack, but his bed stood against the wall some distance from Pippin's own, and there was plenty of room for both.

Pippin was tired after his long walk, and ravenously hungry. The room in which he ate was a step below the pavement of the street, and he could see the people passing to and fro. It was about seven o'clock of a fine evening, and all the town seemed to be taking the air. "When I have rested a little," said Pippin to himself, "I will go out and see what sort of people they are, and what sort of a town it is they live in."

The landlady brought him his supper, and looked in every now and then to see how he was doing, always with a word of encouragement to his appetite, which needed none. Towards the end of his meal she found time to linger, and, with an obvious curiosity, said that she supposed he would be off again directly he had finished his business. She did not know what that was, but hoped she knew her place better than to ask.

"Oh, my business!" said Pippin. "To-morrow it will be to walk until I find as cosy an inn as this, as good a supper, and as handsome a landlady. And the day after it will be the same."

"Hark at him now!" she said. "It would be a bad day for us women if we believed all the nonsense that gay young sparks like you chose to talk to us. You've got a sweetheart of your own at home, I'll be bound, and you ought to be thinking of her."

"I've got a father and mother at home, and a horse and a dog," said Pippin; "and that is all I've got, and

all I want." Perhaps he forgot his cousin Alison. Perhaps he did not want her name brought in.

"Then you have come away from home to find a sweetheart."

"Wrong again, my dear woman. But if I had I should go no farther than this town."

"Oh, she is here, is she? I thought we should get at what brought you. Is she fair or dark, short or tall? Is her father a rich man or does he work for his bread? Is she young with a pretty face, or old with a fat purse? Does she make eyes at you, or pretend to scorn you? What street does she live in, and what house? I know all the marriageable maids in this town, and though I wouldn't ask a bold question for a fortune, give me a hint and I'll tell you whether to stay and see it through, or go back the way you came."

"She is dark, plump, and comely," replied Pippin. "I don't know whether she has a father—or even a husband. She may have a fat purse for all I know, and I hope she has, but her face is better than the fattest purse that ever weighed down a pocket. She lives in this street and this house, and her name is—well, I don't know what your name is, but if you would like to change it for mine you are welcome."

For answer the landlady put her hand out of the door and called out, "John! John! Come you here."

Pippin went on eating and awaited the arrival of John, who came in with a touch of his forelock, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. He was a man who lived amongst horses, as the shape of his gaitered legs testified.

"John," said the landlady. "I have had an offer of marriage, and a good one."

"Then I should take it, missus," returned John, promptly. "At your age they are not to be picked up every day."

"You go out to your yard," said the landlady, suddenly irate, and bustled the bow-legged chuckling John out of the doorway. Then she turned upon Pippin. "And you, young gentleman," she said severely, "don't you play off your impudent pranks on a respectable woman who is old enough to be your mother—at least, will be in five or six years' time—or a bit over. I've buried one husband, and a bad one he was to me, and if I take another it won't be a baby just out of his cradle, but a man of years and sense."

"Such as our friend John," said Pippin, unabashed by this sudden change of weather. "I should think he would make you a good one."

"If I chose to take him," said the landlady, tossing her head, "it would be a step up in the world for him and a step down for me."

"Oh, never mind about that," said Pippin. "There are no steps when a man and a woman walk along happily together. Their road lies on the level, or after a time very gently down hill."

"There's some sense in your head, as well as a great deal of nonsense," said the landlady. "Well, to be candid with you, I have half a mind sometimes to take John. He is as sober as he need be, and though he has a taste for the flurry of a petticoat above what is becoming in a man of his years I would undertake to break him of that."

"He consoles himself with the maids, not daring to look as high as the mistress."

"You think that is it?" said the landlady doubtfully.

"Why, of course it is," answered Pippin. "Give him a sign of encouragement and you will soon have him at your feet."

"Well, to speak the truth, I have given him several, in one way or another. Yes, I would take him, if he could make up his mind to ask me. But he doesn't seem able to."

"Then you must ask him," said Pippin decidedly, and with that they left it, very good friends with one another.

Pippin went out to see the town when he had eaten his supper. The twilight was now falling, and a saffron light lay over the roofs and chimneys. But the streets were still full of the townsfolk taking the air after the labours of the day. There were sober citizens with their wives and sometimes with their children, there were boys and girls, playing the old game which makes of the meanest place a paradise for youth and hope.

This place was not at all of the meanest. The street, towards the lower end of which lay Pippin's inn, was broad and clean. There were shops in it that looked as if their owners were thriving, and every now and then an old house, not yet dispossessed by the new order of things, which showed that the prosperity of the town was of some standing. At the summit of the low hill on which it was built was a broad market-place with the bigger shops around it, on one side of the square the town hall, an old stone building with a high roof, and on another the church, where these good people gathered on

Sundays, as many as had a mind to lay aside the cares of the week, and some few besides.

Watching the people pass to and fro, and greet one another continually, as if they were one very large family, of which there was not a member who had no friends amongst the rest, it came into Pippin's mind that life in a town such as this might be very agreeable. Its inhabitants were not cut off from the pleasures of the country, which lay all about them, and they had in addition the society of their fellows, the lack of which makes those who dislike solitude dread the life of the open country in spite of its attractions.

"If I had been brought up in a town," he said to himself, "I wonder if I should have been more contented." He was not yet wise enough to know that the most philosophical of mortals are not free from the contradiction of valuing above its worth the situation in which they do not find themselves, even although they may deliberately have rejected it.

He would have liked to talk with one of the prosperous tradesmen of the place and hear all about his circumstances; but all the big shops were shut, and even if they had not been it was probable that the most prosperous of those who owned them would not have found time to satisfy his curiosity, since prosperity comes from action and not from talking about it.

He did find one small shop open in a side street, and a pale youngish woman behind the counter with a child clinging to her skirts. She was tidying her meagre stock for the night—it consisted of children's toys, articles of stationery, a few books, and a thousand and one useless flimsy articles which it is a wonder that any one takes

the trouble to make, or that having been made they should find a purchaser. Her eyes brightened when Pippin came in, and he was sorry that his purchases only came to a few pence; so he bought a shilling toy and gave it to the little child, and all three of them were pleased.

The woman told him that it was a hard task to wring a livelihood out of her shop, when all her expenses were met. She had been brought up to better things. Her husband had been a schoolmaster, and they were very happy together. He had saved money and set up a school of his own. They were just beginning to make money when he died, and she had embarked what little remained to her when his affairs were settled in this business. But she was inexperienced. She had paid ready money for all her stock, but much of it was unsaleable, and out of what every one could sell there were small profits to be made. If she could begin entirely afresh she thought she might do well, for she knew now what people wanted, and there were many who would give her custom for the sake of her husband, who had been much respected in the place. But she had no capital for a fresh start, and knew of no one who would lend her any.

And there was another trouble. The big shop round the corner, owned by a man whose name she mentioned, was extending to different branches of business. She had heard that a stationery department would soon be opened, and she feared that that would take away the small remnant of trade that remained to her. "It is the big crushing out the little," she said. "It goes on all over the world. But I think he might have left my line of business alone. I believe he expects to make very little out of it. He came in here the other day and asked me

many questions about the value of my stock and cried it down when I told him. He said that what I had got would be nobody's loss, and there was nothing in the business even if it were carried on properly. But it means my livelihood, and its loss my ruin."

Pippin went back to his inn rather saddened. He wished he could have helped this poor woman, who tried so hard to make a living for herself and her child. He thought it quite likely that with another start she might do so, for she was well-spoken and seemed to have energy; and the poor stock which she did possess was displayed with ingenious care to conceal its deficiencies. He also felt indignant against the man who was going to take from her the little she had, and came to sneer at it before doing so.

He found half a dozen men sitting in the parlour where he had eaten his supper, their glasses on the table in front of them. They were all well-to-do in appearance and none were young. He would have drawn back, but one of them, a stout middle-aged man wearing a heavy gold watch-chain and a diamond ring, and smoking a cigar where the rest were content with clay pipes, called out to him.

"Come in, sir, come in," he said, "and take a glass with us. Hi, Mary!" he called out. "Here's another order for you. Come, bustle up. What is it to be, sir, ale or spirits?—wine, if you like, for trade's good and I've got my share of it."

"Wine for him?" said the landlady, who had answered to the call. "He doesn't want wine. He's a nice lad, and my good ale just suits his complexion."

So a tankard was brought for Pippin, and he sat

down with the rest. Having made him welcome, they troubled about him no more, but went back to their conversation, which had to do with trade and the making of money.

The dispute, if dispute it could be called that was nothing more than the airing of different views, which salts the intercourse of good friends, seemed to hinge upon the question as to when a man had enough.

"I say," said a small, shrunken man, with grey hair and rather untidy clothes, "that when a man has enough to live in the house in which he was born, in the way in which he was brought up, he ought to leave his work and make way for younger folk. I've no fancy for what is called bettering yourself. I like old friends and old ways. Getting rich means getting trouble."

"Ah, that's all very well for you," said Pippin's host, who seemed, by his superior prosperity to be acknowledged as the leader and informal chairman of the gathering. "That's all very well for you. You're a man with a hobby. Give you a book of good print and you won't need a book ruled for cash. And besides, you're a warm man, and have an old-established business that runs itself, if I may say so. Your heart is not in it."

The old man puffed in silence under this charge, while another man with rather a discontented look said: "If you sold books instead of corn you wouldn't want to leave your business till it left you. The great thing is to deal in what you take an interest in; and I wish I did."

"There's not a particle of sense in that," said a stout, jolly-looking man with smooth black hair; and added,— "in a manner of speaking," to take the edge off his words. "You trade to make money. I don't take more interest

in beef and mutton than I do in any other good victuals, but I make my living out of them and cut them up with a cheerful heart. When I have made enough, why I'll go on and make more. It is a warming thing to make more money than you want to spend."

"That's it," said the man with the cigar. "But you must take a pride in your business too. And if you do so well with it that you raise yourself a step higher in the world, why so much the better."

This last saying did not meet with universal approval. The old book-loving cornfactor grunted dissent, and the discontented-looking man, who was an undertaker, without that satisfaction in the circumstances of woe which upholds a man who plies the most mournful of all trades, said, "Give me a clean trade and the company of my equals and I'll leave that of my betters alone."

There was a murmur of applause, and a thin, sandy-haired man said: "That's sense, that is. My business, as you all know, takes me to the houses of the gentry, and I often think to myself as I'm seeing them out of an old house or into a new one, or laying a carpet, or suchlike: 'You don't live better than me, though you spend more money, perhaps more than you've got, which don't make for peace of mind. Furthermore,' I say to them—if they're not by—'you live here alone in your glory, and you see such of your neighbours as are good enough for you, if you ask them or they ask you. But whenever I want to see a friend, I step in round the corner and do it, or he steps in and sees me. My friends are all about me, and this very night I shall drink a glass and enjoy a talk with men I've grown up with; and they know and like me, and I know and like them.'"

At this generous compliment the murmured applause was renewed, and a quiet man who had not yet spoken, said: "Trade is the best calling in the world, and no man ought to want to get above it."

The man with the cigar looked from one to the other as they spoke, with a good-humoured tolerance. "Come now, neighbours," he said, "is this aimed at the little box I've built myself outside the town—where nobody is made more welcome than you,—and my little bit of land, or is it only general?"

Addressed in this way, all of them disclaimed any particular application in their words. "But you talked about going up a step in the world," said the cornfactor.

"Well," said the other, "that goes with successful trade, and always has. And it's more for your children than yourself. What I may have in mind for them is one thing, and what I practise myself is another. I work hard at my business and enjoy it, and when I've put up my shutters, I enjoy myself with my family or else with my neighbours. I don't want to step above them and never shall. And nobody can say I don't take my share in the affairs of the town."

"You do well by yourself and by the town, and your neighbours are proud of you," said the upholsterer, and addressed him by the name which the woman in the little shop has given to Pippin as that of the man who was about to ruin her. Pippin had already suspected that it was his, and had viewed with distaste the man's complaisance. He now broke into the conversation and all eyes were turned on him.

"I suppose successful trade in a place like this means crowding out the unsuccessful," he said boldly.

"Well, in a manner of speaking, it does," replied the butcher. "But there's room for all, and live and let live is a good motto."

"It is a very good motto," said Pippin; "for those who keep it. I have just come from talking with a poor woman who would like to see it carried out. She has a little shop of her own and is just about to see her trade taken away by a bigger one." He fixed his eyes boldly on the man with a cigar, who coloured a little and looked away, but immediately afterwards faced him again and took up the challenge.

"Come now, young sir," he said, "you have been hearing a tale of my new venture, I take it."

"Yes, I have," said Pippin. "And though I thank you for your hospitality I would not have accepted it if I had known who you were."

"Well, we'll leave that alone for a moment. You can speak your mind just the same. You think I ought to leave a branch of business alone that I can do well, because I shall cut across somebody else who is doing it badly."

"She would do it very well if she had some money to make a new start with."

"That's as may be. But she hasn't got the money, and I have. What have you got to say to that?"

"That I think you might spare her a little of it."

The man with a cigar laughed cheerfully. "Oh, that is how you would conduct a business, is it?" he said. "Well, my young friend, I don't think you would conduct it long. I don't know what my neighbours think."

"Business isn't charity," said the undertaker, and the rest agreed with him.

"That's very plain to see," said Pippin, nettled at their indifference. "I suppose I am in the company of the most considerable tradespeople in this town, and there isn't one who has a thought of pity for a poor woman who is going to have her means of livelihood taken away from her."

"You mustn't speak like that," said the old cornfactor gravely. "The good woman you talk of is well known to all of us and we are sorry for her troubles."

"Oh, sorry!" said Pippin, scornfully. "That won't boil her pot."

There were signs of irritation at that saying. "Why don't you lend her the money for a new start, young gentleman?" asked the upholsterer. "It's a cheap way of showing pity to ask other people to dip their hands in their pockets."

"Because I haven't got any money," replied Pippin, "as you probably know. If I had I would lend it her, for I believe she would do very well with it."

"Trade won't thrive on borrowed money," said the undertaker, and again there were murmurs of assent.

"Well, you all know more about trade than I do," said Pippin, rising to his feet, "and you are welcome to your knowledge. But there is one thing I should like to say to you, sir," he added turning to the man with the cigar. "It may suit you to take this poor woman's living away from her, and as it is all in the way of business, I suppose you are quite satisfied with yourself. But I think you did a cruel thing when you went to gloat over her misfortunes, and sneer at her efforts to support herself."

"There, that's enough, young gentleman," said the man with the cigar, with a change of tone. "You're young

and headstrong and can only see one thing at a time. You are quite right to feel pity for a good woman who has seen misfortune, but you are quite wrong to think that her neighbours, who know her much better than you do, don't feel the same pity, and more."

"I judge by what I have heard and you have not denied," said Pippin.

"I am about to deny it now," proceeded the other. "None of my friends here know what is in my mind about my new extension. I don't talk of a thing more than I can help till I've done it. But they know I'll do what is right as far as I can by everybody. They know that my new department will want a capable head, and I daresay they guess who that head is to be, with a salary that will keep her and her child in comfort without a bit of anxiety or more forethought than is necessary to go on day by day. I don't say that I should never lend a person money to start a business, if I thought they could make good use of it—and I shouldn't talk about it if I did—but it wouldn't be my ordinary way of doing business. I would rather help them by helping myself, if I saw any way to it; and that is what I am going to do in this case."

"Yes, and if you said that you were starting a shop of that sort to find a job for somebody else, nobody would contradict you," said the upholsterer.

"I shouldn't say that, if it were true," said the man with the cigar, "and it wouldn't be true here. I shall do very well out of it."

Pippin had sunk from the height of indignation to the depth of shame, during the progress of this enlightenment, and could only hang his head and stammer out

words of apology for having so misunderstood what was after all very little of his business.

"Don't you think anything more about it," said the man with the cigar. "You're generous and hot-blooded, as I like to see a young man. There's no harm done."

Soon afterwards the little party broke up, and Pippin went up to his attic bedroom, where he found the pedlar already ensconced and sleeping sweetly.

CHAPTER VIII

PIPPIN SPENDS A DAY WITH A PEDLAR

THERE is no telling how late Pippin would have slept the next morning had he not been suddenly awakened, at about five o'clock, by a loud noise in the room. He sat up in his bed startled, and saw the pedlar, standing in shirt and trousers by a large wooden box in the middle of the room, and looking towards him with a face of the deepest concern.

He was a little man with a mild expression. His thin grey hair was tumbled about his head, and with his bright eyes and rather aquiline nose he looked like a gentle but rather frightened cockatoo.

"Oh, dear, that's bad," he said, as Pippin stared at him. "I wouldn't have done it for the world. Such a sweet sleep as you were in, too! I meant to get out of the room as quiet as a mouse. But I caught the lid of the box as I was tiptoeing by and it fell with a crash. Now do lie down again, sir, and go to sleep and I won't make another sound."

"Well," said Pippin, "as you have wakened me—and I bear no malice for it—I think I will get up, and set out on my journey. The early morning hours are the pleasantest, and it is a shame to spend them in sleep." And with that he sprang out of bed, a vigorous, active youth, seizing the gift of another bright day.

"Now, that is very pleasant hearing," said the pedlar, gratefully. "It is what I feel myself and the rule I go

by; and to find another who thinks as you do—why that delights a man. And may I be so bold as to ask where your journey takes you?"

"Anywhere in the wide world," said Pippin, splashing cold water over his face and shoulders and his close-cropped head. "With you, if you care for my company, and are going to meet the sun."

"That is my intention," said the pedlar, "and I shall be very glad if you will walk with me. But I must warn you that I do not cover many miles in a day, laden as I am; and I do not keep to the high-road, where trade flows from the shops, but visit the out-of-the-way farms and cottages, where they are always pleased to see me."

"Then for one day I will be your companion," said Pippin now drying himself vigorously with a rough towel. "After that I must get on, towards the big town."

They crept downstairs through the silent house. In the kitchen a yawning servant maid was laying a fire, sad to be awakened so early out of her sweet sleep and finding no pleasure in her work as yet; though with the bustle of the day, and people coming and going, she would presently wake up and take her share in making the world move. The stout landlady was not yet to be seen, but Pippin had paid his reckoning the night before and taken adieu of her. As they went out through the stable yard, the crook-legged ostler, John, was carrying pails of water. "What, running away so early?" he exclaimed, chuckling sardonically. "Ay, and well you may! She'll catch you else, not a doubt of it, and put you in a cage."

"The cage is prepared for somebody else," said Pippin,

"and a very handsome well-lined cage it is, with the door open for one knowing old bird to walk in whenever he has a mind to."

"Ay, and find it clapped to on him when he gets there," returned John. "That bird will take his seed and his sugar and his bit of chickweed outside, thanking you all the same for the warning." And he retired with his mouth on the grin into the stable.

"Ah, you have found out how the land lies," said the pedlar as they went out under the archway into the street. "That's a match for certain, sooner or later, and I expect to hear it has come off every time I pass this way. She's set her heart on him, and I wish her joy of her bargain. He's a wicked old rascal for a man of his age, though a good worker. But a woman alone is a flower unblown, and this one won't be content till she gets her mate."

The town was only just beginning to rouse itself as Pippin and the pedlar walked through its streets on their way to the open country. Smoke was rising from a few of the chimneys; servant maids were kneeling at some of the doorsteps; down the middle of the street went one here and there whose business called him out early; but for the most part the streets were empty and the windows of the houses still close-shuttered, while behind them lay those who would presently rouse themselves to carry on the work of the little town and see that it did not fall behind the rest of the world by a single day.

"It seems to me," said the pedlar, as they walked between the silent houses, "that, when a man has such a few short years of sunshine given to him, he is wise not to waste an hour of it." And Pippin agreed with him,

though the years of sunshine that stretched before him seemed endless.

"We will walk along the high-road for about five miles to the next village if agreeable to you," said the pedlar, "and there we will have breakfast. Then I take a side road to the hill-farms and villages."

So they walked together, Pippin adapting his pace to that of the older and well-laden man. The pedlar carried his pack slung by a strap on to his back and showed a sturdy stride for one of his years and rather diminutive size. He was a pleasant-spoken little man, agreeably ready to suit himself to his company, but with enough self-reliance to make him not tiresomely complaisant. "If you are out to see the country," he said, "it is a good thing you fell in with me. I know every inch of it, and the places I shall take you to-day are well worth seeing at this time of year, though they lie away from the high-road."

"I walked with a man yesterday," said Pippin, "who told me that those who live the life of the road never take a bypath. They miss the company, and I suppose the beauties of nature do not make up for it."

"They do to some," said the pedlar. "To me, for instance. I love the fields and the woods, and the hills, which seem to speak of something that does not pass away. And as for company, you will get very good company in the places I shall take you to, a good deal better than that of the road, which is used by a great many very idle rascals. The people who live a little apart from their fellows have more of the sense of home, and to my mind there is nothing so comforting as the sight of a pleasant home, with a man working to keep it about

him, a woman helping him in her different way, and a family of children to tie them both to it. And when it is rooted to the kind soil, with trees and flowers and fruit about it, so that the bounties of the earth wrap it round as well as the love that keeps it together, then I say that that is the kind of home that God meant a man to enjoy."

"That is the kind of home that I come from," said Pippin. "But it is a good thing to leave it sometimes. You will like it all the better when you return to it."

"You are more fortunate than I," said the pedlar, rather sadly. "I had such a home of my own once, a humble one, but I loved it. I had a young wife too and a little child—it was many years ago. But they both died, and since that time I have taken to this wandering life, in which I miss them less. I see more of other homes than I should if I were to stay in one place. I have friends all over the country, and wherever I go other people's children give me a welcome. I love them very much, the little creatures that seem to know when a man wants them."

"Do you keep to one part of the country?" asked Pippin.

"I go to the same places year after year," replied the pedlar, "but some of them lie very far apart. I cover my ground twice a year, and I walk about twelve miles a day, sometimes more, sometimes less, summer and winter, except on Sundays, when I lie up and rest, generally in some quiet place, with one or another of my friends. So you see I am not without the happiness of home life, though I sleep in one bed never more than twice in a year. I say, when I am in a cheerful mood, that I have a hun-

dred and fifty homes; but I need not tell you that I would give them all for one of my own."

"And the people you meet on the road," said Pippin, —"are they all strangers or do you get to know them too?"

"I get to know some of them very well. There is a man I saw in the town last night. I have met him here and there constantly for the thirty years that I have been carrying my pack. They call him the Gentleman Tramp."

"Why, that is the man I walked with yesterday," exclaimed Pippin. "It was he who grumbled at my taking a bypath."

The pedlar eyed him a little askance. "You are not making your companions on your journey of such as he?" he asked.

"Oh, as to that," said Pippin. "I am ready to make my companions of any one I meet. You can learn something from most men, and I learnt a good deal from him. I spent most of the day with him, but, not liking some of his habits, I got rid of him at the end of it."

"Ah, well," said the pedlar, doubtfully. "I think you should be careful of whom you travel with. You will not take it amiss that I offer you this advice. I am very much older than you, and I have seen a great deal of those who make what they call a living out of the road. That is a very different thing to plying an honest trade as I do, and calling on the road to help you. There is a deal of rascality among those gentry, and the man they call the Gentleman Tramp is as big a rascal as any, though he trades on his superior manners."

"Do those who know him believe that he was really born a gentleman?" asked Pippin, with some curiosity.

"Oh, no," said the pedlar. "We are a pretty shrewd folk, take us all in all—I class myself with the rest, for I know as much about these things as any. There are plenty of men who were born gentlemen among us, not following my calling, or any so honest, for if they could do that they could do something better, but among the true vagabonds, who live from hand to mouth, who will do no work at all if they can eat and drink without it. They differ greatly; most are bad, but some worse than others. But one thing they have in common; they are all anxious to get rid of the last remains of their gentility. It is far too painful a matter for them to remember what they have fallen from. They will tell you their stories sometimes, but what they will not do is to flaunt their former state in the eyes of the world. Now this man does nothing else. He lives easier than most of them by doing it. He has picked up the trick somewhere, and finds it pays him."

"Well," said Pippin, "he told me his story yesterday, and it was such a story, and told in such a way, as he could not have invented. I believe him to be a gentleman by birth, but I quite agree with you that his ways are crooked."

"You surprise me," said the pedlar, "but no doubt you know the signs better than I. And I will tell you this: he has told his story to nobody else on the road. I have always thought it was because he had not got one. But there is something about you, young sir, that is likely to draw confidences from people. You listen, and one thinks you feel kindly of one."

"I hope I do," said Pippin. "I have left my home and am walking through the country to see as many men as

I can and to listen to their stories, if they will tell them to me. That Gentleman Tramp told me yesterday a little about his life at a University, which I suppose is a place where rich men finish their education. This is my way of finishing mine. I will make the road my University."

"Ah, the road!" said the pedlar. "A man gets to love the road as if it were something human. There it lies, patient and ready for use night or day. A man may take or leave it as he pleases, go either way, quick or slow, on his feet or drawn by horses. It runs between village and village, town and town, as it ran before we who use it were born, and will run after we are dead. I make up a good many stories about the road as I walk, and sometimes I tell them to the children as I rest in the middle of the day. You may learn a lot from the road, and it tells most to a man who treads it with his feet. You will go home wiser than when you left, young sir, and I do not think you would learn more at a University, especially if it is such a one as turned the Gentleman Tramp out on the world."

The broad high-road on which they were now walking had woke up since they left the little town. They passed slow-moving carts, drawn by strong horses, their heads gravely nodding at each deliberate heavy step. The men who had piled their loads walked beside them, or added themselves to the freight. What the good earth had yielded they and the stout horses were carrying from place to place for the benefit of mankind, and the road was one of the veins or arteries by which their merchandise was spread abroad for sustenance.

Nearer the villages there was more frequent work for

the road. Blue butcher boys exulted in naked speed, sleepy-eyed bakers jogged along with the crisp loaves they had risen betimes to knead and bake, grocers swung themselves up and down from their high springs, and lingered, basket on arm, for a moment's affability, low milk-carts clattered over the granite. The great daily work of distribution was in hand, aided by the road, and the willing creatures that man has seized upon and tamed to that end.

Pippin and the pedlar breakfasted at an inn in a village that ran for half a mile on either side of the road. In the middle of it a narrower lane ran off towards the hills, and this they took when their meal was done.

It ran for some distance on the level, through water-meadows in which cows were grazing, and the flowers and weeds were already beginning to grow tall on the margin of a lazy river.

Presently the road began to rise. The river was now narrower and was sometimes lost to sight amongst trees, though they could hear it singing to itself in its more stony bed. The woods drew together and were very beautiful. The beeches showed a haze of green under the blue sky, the oaks were browner, as if they had refused to listen to the call of spring for as long as possible, the ashes were budding timorously, but the stout hollies laughed at them all, standing up in the glistening mailed coats in which they had defied the frosts of the winter, and the yews wrapped themselves in their sombre cloaks, which the spring was freshening up for them. "They last us a thousand years," they seemed to say, "and are better than the flimsy leafage which fades and is cast away every autumn."

The pedlar led the way through a gate into a wood, and he and Pippin walked along a broad grass ride and presently came to a clearing, where with a little garden and a little orchard and a little meadow, stood a cottage. They went round to the back, past a barn upon the door of which were nailed a various assortment of birds and beasts of prey, such as work havoc with the fledglings that it was the duty of those who lived in this cottage to bring up, that their master and his friends might shoot them when the time came. The coops were all round the paddock. Broody hens were confined in them and clucked warnings to the baby pheasants, which ran in and out, and accepted these dull-plumaged heavy birds as their rightful protectors without question.

A busy woman came to the door of the house when the pedlar knocked, her sleeves rolled up to her elbows, and her arms and hands white with soap-suds. She gave the pedlar a very warm welcome. "But lor'!" she said, "when I tell the children that you've been here while they were at school, there'll be such a to do as never was."

"Never you fear, mistress," said the pedlar. "I shall see the children, with all the rest. I shall be at the school-house at twelve o'clock, and I've got a new story for them which I'll be bound they will like."

"That's good hearing," said the woman, "but come you in, and the young gentleman too, and take a bit of something."

But the pedlar refused this invitation. "It would be nothing but eating and drinking and no trade done, if all you kind people had your way," he said. "You know my rule, mistress."

"As for trade," said the woman. "You've no cause to

grumble about that. Let me go in and wipe the soap off and get out my old teapot. It has been hoarding up for you."

So the pedlar undid his pack and displayed its contents of buttons and threads, and ribbons, and women's knick-knacks, and when he and the keeper's wife had put their heads together and he had wrapped it up again, it was a little lighter than it had been and the leather bag which he took out of his pocket the heavier.

"Now the next time," said the good woman as she bid them farewell, "it is to be a Sunday visit, and I'll take no denial."

"You see," said the pedlar to Pippin, with pleasurable pride, as they set out again through the wood, "I have my friends. There are very few of the people we shall see this morning that will not give me a warm invitation to their homes."

And so it was, although some of the cottages at which they called were humble enough. Everybody was glad to see the pedlar, most of them offered him food and drink, and the hospitality of their roof when he should be pleased to accept it. His pack grew a little lighter at each stopping-place, and he told Pippin that he had to replenish it every two days at least. Many of his customers had gone without things that they needed so that they might buy them of him when he passed that way. He aroused so much goodwill that the most various people were touched by it, and if a woman here and there refused to trade with him it was never done with discourtesy.

They visited cottages by the roadside, cottages in the woods, in the fields. They were welcomed in farmhouse

kitchens, and once or twice at the back doors of gentlemen's houses. It was a busy morning, but a very pleasant one, and Pippin presently became almost as proud of the popularity of his companion, as was the pedlar himself, in his innocent way.

At noon they came to a high-lying scattered hamlet at the lower end of which was a school-house. It stood among pine trees on a little rise and seemed a pleasant place for children to be taught in. A hum of voices came through the open windows, as the pedlar led the way up the steep sandy path to a fallen log a little distance from the building.

"We will sit down here," he said, "and you shall see whether the children's welcome is behind that of their mothers when they come out of school and catch sight of me."

They took their seat on the tree trunk, with the sweet odour of the sun-warmed pines all about them, and presently the hum in the school-house rose to a subdued roar, the door flew open and the first of the released scholars shot out as if propelled by a catapult.

The stream of flying, whooping children set towards the road, and it was not until several of them had run down the path that one turned and saw who it was sitting under the pines. Then there was a shout, and the stream changed its course completely, till it had gathered into a sort of confused pool, with the pedlar and Pippin on their log in the middle of it.

"A story! a story!" cried the children, and the pedlar said: "Very well, I will tell you a story, but you must all sit down on the ground, and those of you who have brought your dinners in your bags can eat them, and after I

have finished there will be something else for you to eat, if you listen carefully."

So all the children, with some expressions of pleasure and some pushing and nudging, sat down on the warm carpet of pine needles and one or two little ones nestled up by the side of the pedlar and Pippin. Some older girls too, pupil-teachers, came out of the schoolhouse and stood by the trees, and the pedlar welcomed them, for he had known them all as little children. But it was understood that the regular teachers were not to be present at these story-tellings, and to them as they came out of the door and went down the path he only waved a greeting.

"Now what sort of story shall it be?" asked the pedlar when all were seated, and the girls asked for fairies, and the boys for giants and pirates.

"I will tell you a new kind of story this time," he said, "which I have made up as I walked along the road going from one place to another." And he told them the story of the Road and the Field.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROAD AND THE FIELD

THERE was once a field, on the outskirts of a large farm. Once a year it was ploughed, once a year it was sown, and once a year it was reaped; and for the rest of the time it was left to the sun and the rain and the frost, which between them helped it to do the work entrusted to it.

Sometimes the farmer rode up to see what was going on, not because he could not trust the field to do its appointed work if left to itself, but for his own satisfaction, and perhaps a little because he pitied its solitude. For it was bounded on three sides by a wood, and at the upper end by a heath, and there was no road or path anywhere near it by which men went to and fro. But the farmer came very seldom, and no one else at all, except now and then in the spring some children to the wood.

One year the crop was reaped as usual, and borne away in carts, but with great trouble, for much rain had fallen, and the ground was heavy; the cart wheels sank into it, and the labouring horses had much ado to pull them out, sinking in themselves to the fetlocks.

The time came for the yearly ploughing, but no plough came. The winter passed, and the farmer had not once been up to look at the field. "This is unaccountable," it said. "He must have forgotten me. But if he does not come soon it will be too late to get me ready for the sowing. My weeds are sprouting fast, and there is the moor, which has to be taught its place every year, threat-

ening to over-run me. It has already jumped the ditch, and I am really getting very uneasy."

The time for sowing came and went by, and the field received no attention. All the plants that it had hitherto kept at arm's length seized upon it. The heather pushed into it from the upper end, the gorse took hold, in a damp corner a colony of weeds established itself, nettles and thistles appeared, apparently from nowhere, and behaved most insolently, as if all that had hitherto been done for the field had been done for their especial benefit; and there was soon enough grass to encourage the rabbits to come out of the wood and feed on it; indeed, one enterprising doe even took steps to establish a stop.

"I am ashamed to look the sun in the face," said the field. "I am forsaken by men, and shall soon be a field no longer."

One day in the spring, when it had given up all hope of being able to do anything to preserve its self-respect as a field for that year, some men came out of the wood and walked along its lower end. A little time after, more men came, carrying chains and curious-looking instruments.

"When I was worth looking at," said the field, "nobody came from one week's end to the other. Now that I am not fit to be seen, all the world comes."

It tried to say politely to the men, "I am quite ashamed that you should see me looking like this." But a field can only speak to men through its growing crops, and of course the thistles and nettles were not going to carry a message like that. They were quite satisfied with themselves, and were doing their best to prevent the field speaking at all.

"I do not remember having ever seen agricultural implements of that sort," it said to itself, alluding to the instruments with which the men were busy; "but I am glad that something is to be done at last."

But the men went away in the evening, and did not come back again, and the moor said grimly, "I shall get you after all."

The next thing that happened was that still another lot of men came to cut down trees in the wood on either side of the field. The axe rang all day long, and there was more talk and more company than the field had ever known, except at harvest time. But it could take no pleasure in it because of its unhappy and degraded state.

One day, as the trees were falling, the farmer rode out of the wood and sat on his cob, looking over the broad slope of the field. "That's a nice mess," he said. "I shouldn't have let it begin to go back if I had known what was going to happen. But I shall plough it deep when the time comes, and give it a good dressing. It will be better than ever next year."

Then he turned and rode off again. The field was jubilant, and all the weeds and usurping plants to which it had given unwilling harborage trembled on their stalks.

The field, relieved that something was going to be done to it at last, could now look at what was going on around it with some interest. "It is the woods' harvest," it said, as the trees fell, one after the other, "and it has been a long time coming. But why do they not reap it all?" For the trees were only being felled in a broad band on either side.

When the trees were cut down, and trimmed where they

lay, the woodmen brought carts, and with great labour carried away first the trunks and the bigger branches, then the grubbed up roots, and then the neatly bound stacks of bark and brush-wood. The heavy carts passed to and fro over the lower end of the field between the clearings, and their wheels made deep ruts, and often stuck fast. The woodmen swore heartily at the yielding ground, and the field was indignant. "I was made to bear crops, and not carts," it said. "I ought not to be used in this way."

When the woodmen had gone the navvies came, with spades and picks and barrows. They dug out the earth from one of the woodland clearings, and piled it in a bank on either side. The field watched this operation with interest. "Now they will go over and do the same to the other clearing," it said, when they had reached its own border; but they came right on, and removed the top spits of its own good earth.

"I suppose they know what they are doing," said the field; "but I shall never be able to grow anything on my sub-soil."

By the time the first gang of navvies had carried their wide trench into the further part of the wood, another gang had reached the first part, and were filling the trench with cartload after cartload of stones. "Surely," said the field, "they can't be going to put them on to me! Why, I couldn't grow a blade."

But on came the flow of stones, and, a little way behind the carts and the shovels, came a great heavy thing on monstrous wheels, such as the field had never seen, and snorted up and down, pressing and grinding the stones together into a hard flat surface, on which even a thistle

could have gained no lodgment. "Can the farmer possibly know of this outrage?" enquired the field.

The farmer rode up, just as the stones and the engine had got across to the further wood. He did not seem in the least surprised at what he saw, but gave orders to the man who had come with him to have a ditch dug, and posts and rails and a gate put up; and also, to the field's great delight, for the ploughing to be done at once; for some months had passed since the trees were felled, and it was now time again for the earth to be prepared for the next season's crops.

The ploughmen came, and up and down the long furrows went the horses, making short work of the weeds and the gorse and the heather, the nettles, thistles, reeds, and grass, which had taken such hold that they must have thought themselves established for life. But when the ploughs got down near to the stones, they turned and went up again.

"And no wonder!" said the field, to that part of itself upon which the stones had been rolled. "I cast you off. You are no longer part of me."

It lay in its new dress of wet ribbed earth, its pride restored to it, and very beggarly in comparison looked the hard stones, and the weed-grown bank beside them.

"You can't cast me off," said a mournful voice. "We are not divided yet."

The field quivered with surprise in every clod; for a field may be cut into two by a hedge or a fence, or even a ditch, and when the division has been made there are two separate fields, and each speaks with its own voice. But until that has been done you may treat different parts of a field in different ways but it is still only one field.

Now this field knew that well enough, and knew that it had no right to disown any part of itself because it was ashamed of it, any more than a man can disown his own nose because it is not ornamental enough to please him.

But if that was so, whence came the separate voice?

There was silence for a time, and then the field asked in a subdued tone: "Who's that speaking?"

"You know well enough," replied the mournful voice. "I am that part of you that has been so badly treated."

"That is not possible," said the field. "You must be something quite different, or you couldn't speak at all. I don't understand it."

"No more do I," replied the voice; "but you can see for yourself that there is no division between us yet, so I must still be a part of you; and you can't cast me off."

"I shall be able to, very soon," said the field, "for they have staked out the ditch and the line of the fence already. Then you can be whatever you like, but you won't be me. What you are now I don't know."

The voice was silent. It did not know either, as yet.

The ditch was dug and a post and rail fence of split oak was put up, with a stout five-barred gate in the corner by the wood.

"Now I am free of you," said the field, "and perhaps you will kindly tell me what you are and why you spoke with a voice of your own before you were cut off."

The voice was mournful no longer. "I am the road," it said proudly. "I was a road even before the fence was put up, although I did not know it. You may keep your brown ribbed dress. I am proud now of my hard white one."

"Which you will wear all the year through," said the field sharply. "In the spring I shall change mine for a green one, and in the autumn I shall wear one of ruddy gold."

This was true, and the road kept silence, for it was too young yet to know its own value.

"Fancy priding yourself upon being made of nothing but hard stones!" the field went on, pleased with the advantage it had gained. "Not a single thing will you grow, and you know well enough, however you may choose to disguise it, that the best use the earth can be put to is to grow beautiful and serviceable things."

This was also true, and the road had lost that power, and did not know yet what it had gained instead. It maintained a meek silence, so that the field grew a little ashamed of crowing over what had, after all, once been part of itself, and turned its attention to the business in hand, which was to get properly weathered in preparation for the spring sowing.

One day the farmer came riding along the new road with his little daughter. He got off his cob and leant over the gate, for he was an understanding man and knew that a field-gate cannot feel itself part of its surroundings until a man has leant on it.

"What a beautiful clean field, father!" said the little girl; and the field thrilled with pride.

"It was dirty enough a month ago," said the farmer. "And it would be dirtier still now if the new road hadn't come just alongside of it. 'Tis a good bit of land, but it was more trouble than it was worth—so far away from everything—and I was for letting it go back to the moor. The road has saved it."

It was now the road's turn to feel proud, but also a little puzzled; for it had not yet come to the knowledge of what great purposes it was to serve.

The farmer and his little daughter trotted off, and there was silence for a time. Then the road said: "You heard that, I suppose. The moor was to have been let in on you; but I saved you."

"I don't want to hear any more of such nonsense," said the field. "All I know is that nothing will grow on you, and if I were you I should hold my tongue."

The road made no reply. It still had enough of the nature of the field out of which it had been made to feel rather ashamed that nothing would grow on it. "I will see what comes of it all," it said to itself; "and then the field and I will talk again."

The silence held for many months, during which the field hugged the pride of its growing crop, and the road learned its usefulness.

Then, one summer morning, when the green ears of corn with which the field was filled from bound to bound were just beginning to turn yellow, the pride of the field broke out and it sang a pæan of rejoicing. This song of the fruitful earth is so loud that even men's deaf ears sometimes hear it. Long ago it was written: "The valleys stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing."

Now if the field had contented itself with rejoicing in its fertility there would have been nothing to answer. But, led away, possibly, by the intractable spirit it had inherited from its mother the moor, when it had finished its song it went on to jeer at the road's barrenness.

"From each of the seeds sown in me," it said, "springs a straight supple lance, and at the head of each is a

heavy ear of rich ripening corn; the finest fruit the earth can bear. You will never grow another blade of corn as long as you live."

But the road had been waiting for this for months, and now replied at once, in a ringing confident voice, very different from that with which it had last addressed the field.

"Though I shall never grow another blade of corn," it said, "my barrenness is as useful as your fertility. Without me nothing could be spread abroad that you grow for the service of man; without me you could not grow anything at all."

"I don't know what you mean by that," said the field. "For years before you came I grew crops, though not so good as this one. You know that well enough, for you were part of me."

"You were allowed to grow them," said the road, "but it was with the greatest difficulty that they were carried away. So much so that if it had not been for my coming you would have grown no more. You would now have been in a worse state than you were last year, and next year you would have been swallowed up by the moor."

The field knew that this was true, and its myriad ears of corn trembled.

"You say," went on the road, "that you have never grown so good a crop as this. Why?"

"That is easily answered," said the field. "Because of the good dressing I received."

"And who brought up the dressing? I did. You had none for years, because it was too much labour to get it here. And who brought up the ploughs? I did, before I knew what I had been made for. And the seed. And

when the harvest comes I shall bring the reapers and their carts; and I shall carry away the sheaves. It is quite true that I have saved you, and I alone."

"I admit," said the field, after a pause, "that you have been most serviceable to me. I suppose I was so valuable that the farmer had you constructed for that purpose."

"The farmer had nothing whatever to do with it," said the road. "It was worth while to cultivate you again, after he had decided to let you go, because I happened to be coming this way. But I haven't told you half that I do yet.

"When I have taken your corn to the farm to be threshed, I take it to the miller to be ground into flour; and the flour I take to the baker to be made into bread; and the bread I take to the homes of those whom it nourishes. All the fruits of the earth I and my brothers carry here and there where alone they are of value; and everything else besides which men need in life. For there is no jealousy in the brotherhood of roads, and all of us, old and new, work together. And men themselves we take all over the world, on their business and their pleasure. You have seen that for yourself. None ever came here before, but now many people pass you every day.

"The end of the matter is this, that without movement human life cannot subsist, and in aiding movement the road is doing a great work of which it has a right to be proud."

"But not so great a work as growing corn," said the field, who was unwilling to be convinced.

The road made no further answer. It was market day and it had a great deal of work before it.

CHAPTER X

PIPPIN WALKS ON AND MEETS MANY KINDS OF PEOPLE

So passed the first two days of Pippin's adventure, and at the end of them his old life seemed very far behind him.

On the third morning he arose very early, as he had made up his mind that he always would do as long as he was on the road, so as to miss nothing of the glory and freshness of each new day. Once more he had shared a room with the pedlar, with whom he had been entertained at the house of a rich farmer for the night. They had supped in a great kitchen, had sat by the fire afterwards, told stories and sung songs, and talked of the pleasures of life and its hardships; and it was to be remarked that the farmer, who had grown fat upon the raising and selling of the necessaries of life, had dwelt chiefly on the hardships, and the pedlar, who had very few of the world's goods, chiefly on the pleasures.

This good man was sleeping peacefully, and Pippin dressed very quietly so as not to awaken him. His thin grey hair was on the pillow, his old face was calm and patient as he breathed softly like a little child, and Pippin, glancing at him every now and then, understood a little of the peace of mind that might come to a man who had gone through sorrow, and had won much because he had asked little of life.

But it was only a very little that he understood, after all; for in his eager youth he looked upon all the good things of the world as if they were held in a deep chest

into which he might dive without ever reaching the bottom; and although he thought it an admirable thing that an elderly man who had fetched out few prizes should make the best of his poor fortune, he took it for granted that his own drawing would yield much richer results.

The air was keen and damp as he let himself out of the still sleeping house, and made his way along the farm lane, across fields, through gates, and between hedges until he came out upon the road again, and went forward. Something of the excitement with which he had stepped into a new world two mornings before had worn off, and for that day at least, walking through the rain, which presently set in for a steady downpour, he did not recapture it.

The rain damped his spirit of adventure and threw him back upon his thoughts, which, as he tramped the wet road for mile after mile, were more reflective than eager. "I am no better off at the moment," he said to himself, "than if I were at home. But I suppose any life you take up has its dull moments, and you must put up with them, and look forward to the bright ones."

But do what he would to whip up his flagging spirits he could not encourage himself to any enjoyment of that wet plodding day, and only towards evening, when the rain ceased and the sun shone out from below the clouds, did he console himself with the thought that he had many hours steady journeying behind him, and that there was something in having done what you set out to do, whether you enjoyed the doing of it or not.

He spent the night in a country inn, eating his supper in bed, because his clothes were wet through and had to be dried, and falling asleep directly he had done so.

That day, in looking back afterwards on his journey, stood to him for the first in which he had really done anything, although he had scarcely spoken to a soul, and had walked through a flat and uninteresting country. And the reason for that those who are older and wiser than he was will readily understand. Man's heritage is work, which brings its own reward, and a more lasting one when it is pursued under difficulties.

The next day was fine and he went on again, and so for some days further, during which he made many different kinds of acquaintances and saw many different kinds of places. Of the people he met and talked with on the road, the professional tramps were the most common, and he grew to be rather tired of their company. At first he talked to all who were going the same way as himself, for he had heard a story that had interested him from one of their fraternity, and looked to hear many more.

But he did not again meet a man who had fallen from rich estate to the life of the road, although he met two who claimed to have done so—very palpable liars. And their stories were all much the same. They were shiftless, idle vagabonds, men and women alike, shirkers, dishonest, greedy, and difficult to shake off by a man who had a good suit of clothes on his back, and some money in his pockets. When he had learnt that he could get little from them, although they expected to get a good deal from him, he passed them by with his strong youthful step, and if they shambled along by him, whining and begging, he soon shook them off.

He went a little way with an honest man who was really on the lookout for work, and had with him his wife and two children, and all his worldly goods on a hand-

cart. "I'm strong," he said, "and there's nothing against me, except her and the little ones," and he jerked his head at his thin, poorly-clad wife. "I shall find a place where a good pair of hands is wanted, never fear. They wasn't wanted where I was brought up, so I up and left."

"It was a poor part of the country," said the wife, "and the labouring people are leaving it."

"It was machinery, and all," added the man, sturdily pushing his cart. "And she got ill. Folk like us mustn't get ill, for there's no money to get well with, and we mustn't get old, or we can't earn none. But I'm not old yet, and we'll settle down somewhere, never fear, and get a bit of a home round us again. That's all we want, and it don't seem much, do it, mister?"

"Not for a man who is willing to work for it," said Pippin. "It seems very little."

"Oh, well," said the man suddenly changing his tone, "it may seem little enough to you, but it seems a lot to the likes of us. But you'll understand I'm not asking for pity, nor yet for money, which I'll make for myself if I'm allowed to it."

Here the smaller of the little children, who was riding on the top of the things packed into the cart, began to cry, and said she was hungry. The man's face changed again, and wore a hunted, almost despairing look. He stopped wheeling the cart and said with a glance at Pippin: "When this gentleman has gone on we will stop and have our little bit of dinner. It isn't enough to ask him to sit down to it with us."

Pippin was going on after this rebuff, but the woman threw herself on the little child and clasped it to her breast and cried out, as she rocked it to and fro, "Oh,

it isn't true. All our money is gone and we haven't got a crust of bread to give them. What shall we do? What shall we do?"

"Stop that noise," shouted the man, and turning to Pippin he said roughly: "We didn't ask for your company and we don't want it. You get on your way and leave us alone."

But Pippin stood up to him. "No, I shan't," he said. "We will go on to the village, there, and eat our dinner together."

"I don't want your charity," said the man.

"Your children are hungry through no fault of yours," said Pippin. "How can I eat my own dinner in comfort if you won't share it with me?"

"Your comfort is nothing to me. I've hard enough work in looking after mine and theirs. I won't take your dinner."

"Yes, you will," said Pippin. "Come along now." And he took the older child, who had been crying for company, on to his back, and soon had him merry again as they went forward, the man sulkily pushing his cart and the woman comforting her little one.

They went to an inn which was only a little distance further on the road and there they ate a good dinner. "It is the first meal we have eaten so far, that I haven't earned," said the man when it was ready for them; but his wife, whose pride was broken by her child's tears, said, "When we set out from home we knew that God would not let us starve. If He chooses to send us our food by this kind young man let us take it and be thankful." And by the time the meal was over Pippin had her and the children laughing, and her husband was in better heart to

carry on the struggle for the work which should enable him to give them what was necessary. It looked too as if he might have his chance without travelling further, for the innkeeper's wife was taken by the children, and when she had heard their story said that, when her husband who was away at market returned, he might be able to find the man something to do, at any rate for a time; and so Pippin left them there, and the man came out with him and thanked him for what he had done and said he had not meant anything by his roughness.

"It churns a man up," he said, "to see his children crying for bread, and he doesn't know what he is saying."

At another time Pippin walked a mile or two with an artist, who was old enough to be able to paint very pretty pictures of any scene that took his fancy, and young enough not to care much whether he sold them or not. "It is the life I like," he said. "I come out every spring and go about the country whenever I please till the winter sets in again. I can make enough to keep me going, and that is all I care for."

Pippin was rather glad to meet somebody who took the same view of life as himself. He had talked mostly with older men, those in the places where he had eaten or slept showing themselves averse to the pleasures of a life of movement, clinging to the idea of a home and a settled place of habitation, and willing to barter even their freedom for the sake of it; and those whom he had met on the road quite ready to retire from it if any one would provide them with the means of doing so.

"I think you are quite right," he said. "I am walking for my pleasure too, and I wonder that more people don't do the same."

"They don't do the same," said the young artist airily, "because they are fools, and you and I are not. They get caught, before they have seen anything of this jolly world, by one of two things, money, or a woman. Both are all right if you know how to use them, but if you're not precious careful they'll have you by the heels for life before you know you are caught."

"How does money do that?" asked Pippin.

"Well, it isn't so much the money, as the buying. If you only buy as much as you want for the moment, or can carry with you, or don't mind leaving behind, you are money's master, and you can make a little of it go a long way. But directly you get more than you want for your needs, and begin buying things with it, you must stay in one place to look after them."

"Then it is not so much money as possessions."

"You have caught the idea, my brave boy. Why should anybody want to possess things? If he goes without them he possesses the world. If he clings to them he loses it. Why should I want a house and furniture? Every inn on the road is my house. I love pictures, and every picture in all the world is mine—to look at; and what use a picture is except to look at I don't know. Books! You can't read more than one at a time, and that you can carry in your pocket, and buy another one when you have finished with it. In fact it is just like that with everything. However many things a man wants he only wants one of them at a time, and you can get the use of everything by paying a little money for it, and a good many excellent things without paying anything—a light heart among them, and that is what no amount of possessions will bring a man." And here the young artist began

to troll out a song to show that he was beholden to nobody.

"Wait a minute," said Pippin, "you said there were two things that robbed a man of his freedom. What about the other?"

"Eh?" said the artist, stopped in his singing. "Oh, a woman! Woman's a stay-at-home, a sleek-pawed pussy-cat. She wants a cushion to make her comfortable, and when you have given her a cushion you've got to stick by it. Your days of freedom are over. A kiss and a joke, that's the way to treat 'em. But don't let them get their claws in, my boy."

"I like what you say about money better than what you say about women," said Pippin. "But we needn't quarrel. I want neither the one nor the other, any more than you do."

"Very well, then. But there is something that you will find you do want, and that is some work to do. You can't paint, I suppose. What can you do?"

Pippin laughed. "I can't paint," he said, "but I have done a good deal of work—real work. I tell you frankly I am rather tired of it. I want to see the world and enjoy myself."

"Ah!" said the artist. "Of course, you are very young."

"If it comes to that," said Pippin, "I don't suppose I am much younger than you."

"Perhaps not, but you are much more foolish. However, go on and enjoy yourself. I am going to sit down here and paint a picture."

They had been walking along a road which ran through a noble forest. The artist had always had his eyes about

him, even when he was talking, and now had suddenly found just the picture he wanted to paint. He unstrapped his sketching apparatus, whistling all the while, and, sitting down with his back to a tree, set to work without any delay.

"I shall be happy here for the next few hours," he said to Pippin. "I have enjoyed our talk, but I won't keep you from your journey."

So Pippin left him, wondering a little exactly what he had meant by calling him foolish, and not understanding very well. "He must be older than he looks," he said to himself. "It is the middle aged and elderly men who are always talking about their work and pretending to enjoy it."

He met other people on the road and in the places where he stayed of nights; jovial blades of bagmen who combined the advantages of married with those of single life; travelling musicians whose travelling powers were more apparent than their musical; men who wanted to give him a new religion and others who wanted to take away what he already had; quacks and sharpers, and all the tribe of inventive folk who made their living out of the credulity of others and needed a roving field for their operations; a few who like himself were bound for a point and preferred to travel at leisure by means of their own legs, or had no money to pay for riding.

He saw many places too, and many different kinds of country. The downland and the fertile valley and the wooded hills he had passed through on his first two days' journey, and the flat agricultural country on his third. Then he had tramped for a day along the coast, crossed a brown rolling moor, walked for two days through the

forest aisles, and after that had kept steadily on through towns and villages, past streams and fields and woods, up hill and down hill and along the level, coming always nearer to the great city which, however, was still many days' journey ahead of him.

He did not walk upon a Sunday, but took the rest enjoined of old upon man and beast for one day out of the seven; and his Sundays were pleasant days to him, especially the second, when a little of the spring of his adventure had left him and his thoughts homed back to the settled life he had left for a time.

He would not have gone back to it yet. It was very much out of the world which he had come forth to see, and its monotony had irked him. But as he awoke to a day of soft spring sunshine and lay for a while in his bed in the luxury of quiescence, instead of rising up at once to take the road as on other days, it came to him that there had been times when he had been very happy, and that his home was still there, unchanged, though he was already far from it and it would be many a day before he saw it again.

The work-a-day world would have changed its aspect, there as here. The very sounds of the farm would be subdued, as if beasts as well as men knew that this was a day of rest. The birds would be twittering under the eaves outside his window, through which would be coming the fresh scents of dawn. By and by the chime of church bells would be borne on the wind from across the hill, and later in the morning many of those whom he had known since his childhood would gather in the church, where ancient stone and ancient oak, for centuries welded into a living unity, gave forth a drowsy scent, the memory of

which would move him all his life long. Alison would be there, devout and collected, but after church, walking home through springing cornfields, she would be bright and gay. Or perhaps, because he would not be at her side, or following her across the narrow field-paths, she would not be very gay.

Dear Alison! Was it true that he would not see her for another year?

CHAPTER XI

THE OLD CLERGYMAN AND HIS STORY

It was a beautiful place, this in which Pippin rested on the second Sunday of his journeyings. Some centuries before, a great man, saved from some peril of his enemies, had built here a noble abbey, thinking to pay his debt in that way to the Power that had intervened on his behalf, and if history lies not had left it to those who worked and prayed here for some centuries more to purge his errors for him, while he applied himself to increasing the sum of those errors, until he came to this place to die in sanctity and make a final end of them. However that may have been, the work of the monks had been well done, both in making productive the wide lands of their abbey and in the still more important matter of tilling the hard soil of their hearts. And they had shown hospitality to wayfarers, and provided refuge for many who in those unsettled times were in trouble, whether from some fault of their own or from the persecution of strong and evil men.

But there had come a time when this and other religious houses had been given over to the spoilers, and now there was little enough left of all the glories of building that had once shone like a jewel in this fair spot; only a little chapel in place of the great abbey church, of which there was scarcely a stone remaining, a noble barn of stone and timber, still put to its original use of husbandry, and a cloistered garth, in which flowers and herbs took the place of the human activity that had once filled it from dawn to dusk.

One of the abbey buildings abutting on this quiet enclosed garden had been adapted to the uses of a modest dwelling, in which lived the old clergyman who served the handful of parishioners left over from the thriving community dispossessed and scattered so long ago. Hard by was the entrance to the little church, and after the morning service had been said and sung it was the custom of some of the congregation to walk for a time in the old man's garden, of which he was very proud. Pippin joined them, and the old clergyman greeted him cordially, enquired of him whence he had come and whither he was going, and presently asked him to share a meal with him. Pippin would have preferred to dine at his inn, for although he had learned courtesy towards those far on in life, for which reason he was generally much liked by them, it was some effort to adapt himself to a suitable deference, and he had a suspicion that this kindly old man, with the quick searching eyes which had taken him all in while he was asking his questions, was partly moved to his hospitality by the desire for a new pair of ears, into which to pour the speech that came so readily to him.

And so it proved to be. The old clergyman was a man with a hobby, and few chances of riding it in this remote spot, where the work of the hands was more considered than the work of the brain. During the many years of his quiet pastorate, as successor to the men of old who had followed the same way as himself, though in different fashion, he had searched into books and conferred with learned men, so that he might re-create in his mind the life that had been lived by his predecessors. He was a very mine of lore upon the conventual life of a past age, and lost no time in imparting some of it to his guest, who fol-

lowed him about among the ruined stones and arches, and learned many things about them which interested him, though he could not forbear wondering what kind of refreshment would presently come as a reward of his patience and the exercise of his brain.

For his mentor was not satisfied to pour out the information of which he was so full to ears merely receptive. He must be asking questions. "Now what do you think this was?" Pippin, looking doubtfully at the broken remains of what seemed to have been a line of stone basins, suggested a washing-place, and found that he was right. "It was the lavatorium," said the antiquary, commending him for his intelligence, "and here you see the conduit that brought the water." And he told him much about the cleanly habits of the monks in an age long before cleanliness was practised by the world at large. In the course of his years of study he had formed an idea of the virtues of monastic life somewhat in excess of those with which it has commonly been credited, and Pippin soon came to understand that he lived as much of his life as was convenient in conformity with the habits of the past, and gained a simple pleasure in so doing.

The parlour in which their meal was spread was very simply furnished with a table of solid and ancient oak and two benches to match it, another table for writing, and a few chairs without cushions or any upholstery. The floor was of stone, and there were no rugs upon it, nor any curtains at the latticed windows. The walls were partly lined with books, and for the rest were whitewashed. An ivory Christ upon a large ebony cross hung above the open hearth, and there were some framed prints of sacred subjects elsewhere. On the long broad sill beneath the

window there was a row of pots, in which the sweet-scented flowers of early spring were blooming; and further brightness was given to the bare but sunny room by a canary in a wicker cage, for which the old man apologized, but said that the monks, who were very human, would not have quarrelled with his liking for the song of this foreign bird.

The meal was served by an elderly woman with a kind and pleasant face, who smiled at Pippin and told him that he should not suffer from her master's preference for Lenten fare. Presently he had before him a plate laden with good things, which was probably part of her own repast, while the old clergyman regaled himself more frugally, still talking the while.

"As you are probably aware," he said presently, "the monks ate their meals in silence, except for one who read to them out of a book. You have shown yourself so interested in all that I have told you about the life of those good men that perhaps you would like me to read to you one of the little stories that I amuse myself by writing about them."

Pippin said that he would like this, and meant it, for he had still much to get through of what had been set before him, while his host had already finished eating. The old man searched among his papers, and brought one back to the table with him. "This is a little story suitable to this time of year," he said, and began to read in a deliberate and not unmusical voice his story of

Brother Paul

At the first stroke of the bell Brother Paul hastened to join the group of monks in the cloister. He received his

spade and mattock, and took his due place in the line. "Let us go to our manual labour," said the prior at the door, and two by two the monks filed out, their implements on their shoulders.

It was the season of Lent. They went through the garden, where among the potherbs a few early flowers were showing. They passed the infirmary, where the sick were lying in silence, and the fish ponds, from which they were now chiefly fed. Up the valley they went, singing the *Miserere*, a procession of white figures on the green slope, and came to the vineyard, in which their day's work was to be done.

It was the hour of noon. They had said Matins, Lauds, and Prime, and heard Mass in the great church; they had attended the daily Chapter; they had dined off fish and lentils. The sun was warm, but there was a keen east wind, which nipped toes and fingers, and made it difficult to keep on their thick white hoods of cloth. The light Lenten fare, and the hours they had spent in the unwarmed church and cloister and refectory, made them susceptible to the cold. Brother Paul shivered under the folds of his cape, though he was young and the blood ran lustily in his veins.

The vines had been planted on a terraced slope facing South. A thick wood of oak and beech sheltered it from the North and East. The bare poles stood in serried ranks, still closely bound with their winter protection of bracken.

The prior said a paternoster and a versicle. The monks standing round him replied, and then, girding up their tunics to the knee and throwing back their hoods, fell each to his task.

Brother Paul fell to his very heartily. He worked at the upper end of the vineyard, where it was most sheltered. Very soon his body was in a glow, and his mind lifted. He had been told that when he worked in the vineyard he must think of the True Vine by which the souls of the faithful were nourished and kept alive. To his simple peasant's understanding this meant that the work he was doing was for his especial welfare, both in this world and the next. He was helping the Vine to grow, and he could tell by the pleasure he felt in his task that it must be good work.

He felt the same when he went out with the others to the tidal rivers on which the abbey was built and netted the fish; when the torches shone on the black water, and with much commotion the nets were dragged up on to the grass and the red and silver fish drawn from them and sorted into baskets. So the Saviour of the World had once watched his friends take the fish from their nets.

It was good to be professed, and to do work like this. Outside the abbey walls the world was cruel and quarrelsome. Men destroyed one another's bodies instead of saving their own souls; they oppressed the poor instead of feeding them. They were steeped in wickedness.

Brother Paul stood up and straightened his broad back. The sun was strong, and there was no wind in this sheltered corner. He wiped the sweat from his brow. Before him the trees were covered with a veil of brown and purple, a holly glistened in the sun, and a thorn showed fresh and delicate green. Two blackbirds flirted out from the undergrowth and back again, and in the wood the thrushes were singing. At its edge the primroses clustered thickly.

The voice of spring which speaks clearly just once a year to those who live close to nature rang in his ears. It had been late in coming this year, stifled by the frosts and the bitter winds; but now there was no doubt about it. Winter was over and past; Easter was coming, and the flowers, and the long fair days. Brother Paul laughed aloud for pleasure.

Brother Paul laughed in the sunshine, and Brother John working near him looked up and scowled, with straight thin brows on a lean face, and then went on with the work he hated.

Brother Paul also went on, with the work he loved. He did not want to laugh again. A shadow seemed to have passed over the sun. He had done a dreadful thing. He had forgotten that it was Lent, and he had laughed for pleasure.

Easter, suddenly, seemed a long way off. He had many sins to mourn and many temptations to fight. He must confess this new grave fault—unless Brother John saved him the trouble—and undergo penance. If that only meant being beaten, kneeling on the floor of the chapter house in the presence of the community, he would take his punishment gratefully, and not offend again. If it meant kneeling for hours in the church, he knew it would go hard with him.

He loved the church, when he had something definite to do in it. He loved to sing in the choir and take his part in the offices, and it was a joy to him when his turn came to serve with incense or lights. But to be left to silence and his own thoughts—that was the time when the devil pressed him very hard.

He knew very well what would happen. The devil

would brush away all the good thoughts he was trying hard to think, and would force on his mind guilty pictures. He would see himself riding out into the morning with a troop of gay companions, ready to give and take blows and glory in doing so. He would sniff the good scent of the birds roasting before the tavern fire, and the warm red wine, and hear the laughter and the loose merry talk. And, worse than all, the fair face of the reeve's daughter under its blue snood would rise up to taunt him, a very potent trial indeed; for the devil could almost make him believe that the love of a woman, if purged of grossness, was a good thing for a man, and even for a monk. Oh, there was no end to his wiles!

The monks finished their labours and went back to the abbey. The evening sun shone brightly and the birds sang more loudly than ever; but Brother Paul had lost the sense of spring. It was Lent, and he had forgotten it and laughed.

The Lord Abbot sat in his high seat in the chapter-room. His feet were cased in boots of thick felt, and his clothes were lined with fur; but tremors ran continually through his bloodless frame, for he was very old.

The Martyrology was read, the short office recited, and the novices retired.

Then arose Brother John and denounced Brother Paul for breaking silence and disturbing his own pious reflections with a godless laugh. He laid more stress upon his own pious reflections than was quite necessary, and was stopped by the Superior.

Brother Paul, downcast and distressed, did not deny the fault, and if excuses had been allowed would have had none

to offer. There seemed to be nothing further to do but to pronounce sentence.

But the Lord Abbot, shivering with cold, looked at him keenly for a space and then asked him why he had laughed.

It was the sun and the birds, stammered Brother Paul; and he was tending the True Vine.

The Abbot asked the Prior whether Brother Paul's work in the vineyard had been well done—and Brother John's. The Prior said that Brother Paul had worked prodigiously, but Brother John's task had been much interfered with by his pious meditations.

Then the Abbot spoke. He said that Lent was the season for mortification, but inasmuch as God made the earth to laugh in the spring-time, whether Easter, the season of gladness, came late or early, it was pleasing to Him that mankind should take pleasure in His bounties, and in the work that had been assigned to our father Adam for his consolation. Brother Paul must kneel on the floor and receive three strokes for breaking the rule of silence and for laughing aloud when he ought to have laughed inwardly. And Brother John must receive twelve strokes for vainglory, and twelve more because he had neglected the work by which he should have been praising God.

Brother Paul did his penance, and presently went out with a glad heart to uncover the vines and let the sun play upon their opening buds.

The reading of this little story inclined Pippin still more towards the old clergyman, for it showed him not to have forgotten the urgings of youth; and in spite of his preoccupations with a bygone rule of life it was plain that he valued highest the spirit that lay behind it. Later on,

when he had taken leave of him, he found that he was much beloved by the people whom he served in this place. The innkeeper with whom he gossiped told him that he was a man of some wealth, and that his purse was always open to those of his friends who needed help, though for his own needs it was that of a niggard. "He will buy books," he said, "and he will spend money on beautifying his church; but for anything to do with his own comfort the good woman who looks after him has to scheme and contrive to extract money from him. I doubt whether many of those old monks he is always talking about were as good Christians as he is. There was a deal of knavery mixed up with their religion, or it would not have been got rid of and a better put in its place throughout the country."

This speech seemed to show that the old clergyman had not succeeded very well in impressing his views upon the innkeeper, although he had fastened upon him the conviction of his own single-minded charity. But it is often so with those who would bring others to their way of thinking. Their words are passed by, but their lives are regarded.

CHAPTER XII

PIPPIN GOES TO THE CIRCUS AND HAS A PASSAGE WITH A LION-TAMER

The sunny spell of spring weather had changed when Pippin took the road again early next morning. The sky was dull and a keen wind was blowing. He could not but confess to himself that he was getting a little tired of his expedition. He was seeing the world, it is true, but the world seemed much the same in one place as another. For a holiday, his present life, seeing new people and new places every day, was well enough; but when a man goes holidaying he is anchored all the while to his home, and Pippin had left his home for a year at least. He did not want to go back to it yet awhile, but he had expected rather more from his freedom than he had yet gained. Youth is greedy of experience, and his experiences, though informative, had so far lacked excitement. He wanted to be doing something, he did not know what, and his chance came when he tumbled headlong into the life of the travelling circus.

Pippin first came upon the tracks of the circus when he passed through a town from which another main road branched off towards the north. It was along this road that the company, with its horses and its gilded equipages, its cages of lions and tigers, and its mighty elephant, had come. Highly coloured pictures of the scenes of curious and exciting life which any one who paid the money might see for himself when the circus had set up its tents

were posted on walls and buildings, and Pippin, who had never seen anything of the kind, was moved by them.

Neither quality nor quantity had been spared in these pictures. There was one of a fairy of extreme youth and ravishing beauty flying through rings of fire and rings of roses held up by respectful grooms in liveries of royal scarlet, while a mettled steed with flowing mane and tail galloped incontinently forward far beneath her. There was another, of a very handsome youthful man in a suit of green and gold and red, standing erect in the midst of a pyramid of magnificent lions, entirely unmoved by their fierce appearance.

But the pictures which pleased Pippin most were those illustrative of Dick Turpin's Famous Ride to York. In one of them this famous highwayman was seen at night clearing a cart full of vegetables and a turnpike gate in one leap of the noble beast he bestrode, while the gate-keeper, with a lantern, and the owner of the cart looked on stricken with amazement, and a posse of mounted constables in the background drew together, too craven to follow him. In a still more remarkable picture, a company of high-born men and ladies attired with splendour, sat at dinner. The table was gay with flowers and fruit and lights and silver. Two bewigged and beliveried footmen served the company, or would have done so had they not been turned aside from their duties by the appearance of Dick Turpin, who, for some reason, had found it necessary to leap the table, company and all. He was depicted in the act of doing so, while the startled guests were seen looking up at him, emotions of fear and astonishment upon each expressive countenance.

There were other pictures, of animals, performing and

otherwise, knights and ladies and fair children, all engaged in bold and stirring achievements, and as Pippin saw no reason to disbelieve the evidence of the pictures, he looked forward very much to seeing all these wonders for himself when he should catch up the circus, which he learnt was a day's march further on this northern road.

He found them encamped in a field in the outskirts of a small town which he reached about seven o'clock in the evening, and after choosing his inn and eating a somewhat hurried meal he set out to see the show.

The tent in which it was held was a large one, although its interior arrangements did not carry out the impression of oriental luxury which the posters had led Pippin to expect. He occupied a seat on a narrow board, with the grass of the field for a floor, and in front of him was the barrier which ran round the ring, spread smoothly with tan. The gilded balcony containing a large orchestra in resplendent uniforms with which the pictures had familiarized him was sketchily represented by a boarded box from which five men with braided coats presently began to discourse music from loud and brazen instruments.

But neither Pippin nor the rest of the spectators, of whom there were a considerable number, had come to listen to music or to grumble about the seats they sat on, and when the entrance into the arena was thrown open and the ring-master, attended by six grooms in scarlet coats, buckskin breeches and top boots, strode in cracking a long whip, there were loud cheers from the assembly, for here was something that the posters had not exaggerated, except possibly in the fit and cleanliness of the attendants' liveries.

The ring-master, a tall man with a dark moustache,

the fit of whose clothes left nothing to be desired, bowed graciously to the plaudits of the assembly and cracked his long whip. Two grooms ran to the entrance and threw open the gates, and there ambled in a white horse with long and beautifully combed mane and tail, and on his back a sort of staging covered with red and fringed with yellow. Encouraged by the ring-master's whip the horse cantered gently round the circle, and then with a bound entered a youth in a neat suit of fleshings decorated with blue velvet, who smiled and made motions of affection towards the audience, and then with a sudden access of determination ran towards the white horse and leapt on to the platform, from which he repeated his greetings while he was carried standing round the ring.

Gathering courage he next essayed to turn a somersault, but lost his balance as he returned to the horse's back and slipped off on to the sawdust, was up again immediately, ran after the horse, which pursued its course unaffected by what was happening, leapt on to the staging, and performed his intention this time without a slip. Three times he did this thing, and then sat negligently on the horse's back, graciously acknowledging the applause of the spectators, until the entrance of a clown, announced on the programme as "Little Joey," withdrew attention from him for the time being.

Everybody laughed at the clown, he was so innocent and foolish. The ring-master treated him with lofty courtesy, and seemed himself to be amused by his sallies, although some of them were at his own expense and transgressed the usual bounds of politeness. Even when he flicked him with his whip and made him roll on the ground in vociferous agony it was done without passion, and in the

painful scene that followed, when the clown borrowing his whip on some pretext drove him protesting round the ring, his anger was of short duration, and he was his stately self once more, white gloves and all, when closing the episode, he signed to the grooms once more to put the white horse in motion.

The youth, whose name was Signor Franginelli, after a few turns of the ring nerved himself to his crowning achievement. The band broke off suddenly in the middle of a bar, there was a hush of expectation, broken only by the padding of the white horse's hoofs, and Signor Franginelli, gathering all his forces together, turned a double somersault on the moving platform where before he had only turned single ones.

The band broke out again louder than ever, the audience clapped, the grooms clapped, even the ring-master clapped, and the clown, throwing himself down on his back, clapped with his feet in unmerited derision. The gates were thrown open and the white horse ambled out of the arena, leaving Signor Franginelli, modest and flushed, motioning gratitude to the audience until such time as he was released, and bounded out of the ring with the air of a man who has done more than could have been expected of him.

The performance, opened so auspiciously, accumulated interest as it went along. Little Joey, the clown, was here there and everywhere, getting in everybody's way, imitating with ill success everybody's feats, and respecting nobody's feelings. There was a family of acrobats. The father somewhat stout but indomitably active, the mother a little past her work but spared from too great a strain, the two sons and three daughters, ranging from

about eighteen years of age to seven, models of lissom grace. These did wonderful things on a horizonal bar, and on each other's shoulders and heads. There was a performing elephant, whose intellect, less cumbrous than its body, was shown by the way it emptied a bottle said to contain wine down its own throat, and carried out other feats of a like nature. The ring-master explained to the audience that the rule of its training had been kindness. No one had used brutality to the elephant, and no one should ever do so as long as he—the ring-master, not the elephant—lived.

The Fairy Firefly in her Unrivalled Equestrain Feat performed much the same antics on the back of a piebald horse as Signor Franginelli had done on a white one. She was a rather meagre and elderly fairy, and her flight through rings of fire was not so thrilling as the posters had led Pippin to expect. The grooms, standing on the parapet, lit tissue paper stretched upon wire hoops and when it had flared up and subsided she hopped through them one by one, a hoop of smouldering paper and a hoop of paper roses alternately.

But, if she was something of a disappointment, the Countess di Rimini on her coal black steed, which danced in time to music, the music meeting him as it were half way, and really did jump five barred gates without having them let down for him, made up for the disappointment.

Here was a beautiful and mettlesome woman on a fine horse, and Pippin's heart beat faster as he watched her. She was quite young. She had dark eyes fringed by long lashes, a straight little nose with delicately cut nostrils, a rather full red mouth, and a firm jutting chin to which her soft cheeks curved exquisitely. Her hair under her

high silk hat was dark and glossy. Her figure was slim and supple, and her neat green habit fitted it to perfection. There was nothing of the circus about her appearance or the trappings of her horse, and Pippin wondered how a woman of noble blood, so magnificently dowered by nature, and still youthful, should have come down to earning her bread by circus tricks. He thrilled with admiration of her and the high-bred courage with which she put her splendid mount through his paces. The coloured posters which had done so much more than justice to the charms of the middle-aged homely Fairy Firefly, had failed lamentably in conveying the charm of this adorable Countess di Rimini. He watched her with all his eyes and applauded so vociferously as she rode her horse out of the ring that she noticed him and gave him a little bow and smile, which covered him with confusion, but caused him a delightful sensation of fluttering about the heart.

He came down to earth again as a cage of lions was drawn into the ring by four horses, accompanied by Herr Otto Schwenck, the lion-tamer, whose appearance struck him with instant aversion. He was a big man with a brutal truculent face, and the five undersized beasts cowering in the great cage, and following him with their melancholy puzzled eyes, looked as if they had greater reason to be afraid of his behaviour than he of theirs.

Standing in front of the cage, his big body looking as if it would burst the tight absurd clothes in which it was clad, he made a speech in a deep guttural accent in which he recounted the intrepid manner in which he had captured these same lions in the African desert. "So;" he ended, "I garry my life in my honds when I enter inside dot gage. Dey are not like de lions you see oders blay

wid. Dot big one is a man-eater. Bot he will not eat me. So; you will see."

He opened the door of the cage and slipped quickly inside. The lions withdrew from him as far as they could, and the reputed man-eater seemed as anxious to efface himself as any of them. But with a tap of his leaded whip on the nose of one and the side of another, and with menacing, snapped out words he soon had them opening their horrid jaws and growling at him, while they slunk round and round him in a quick furtive trot, faster and faster as he urged them on with voice and never ceasing whip. He seemed to be able to do anything with them, and their anger, as they were forced to belie their wild natures, and cringe and contort themselves at his bidding, was unmistakeable. He seemed to goad them to show it, and cowed as they were it was difficult to look on at what was passing without a feeling of apprehension. The man certainly seemed to have courage, and, when he stood upright in the middle of the cage with the five beasts posed about him, the reputed man-eater yawning prodigiously above his head, something of his gross brutality seemed to drop from him, and something of the empire of humanity over the wild creatures of the earth to be typified.

When this exhibition was over, and the lions had slunk away from him, snarling, the grooms brought him a table and two chairs with food and wine, all of which he carried into the cage, and then invited any member of the audience to eat and drink with him, promising them immunity from danger. "Here is a very good bifshteg bie," he said, "and a bottle of wine. You will be able all your lives to say you have eaten and drunken in a den of lions. So? Who will come forward?"

Now there had been sitting by Pippin's side during the performance a youth clad in a smock frock and leather gaiters, who hardly looked like a countryman, but as if he had been dressed up to resemble one. He had a great lolling head and an expression of innocent stupidity. He had applauded vociferously everything that had taken place, but when Pippin had said something to him about the performance—it was during the turn of the Countess di Rimini—he had looked at him in a frightened foolish sort of way and answered in words which sounded like "Bogle, google." Pippin had set him down as what villagers call a natural, and had not pursued the conversation. But when the time had approached for the performance of the lions he had turned his attention to him again, for he was noisily applauding no longer, but sat muttering to himself, and was evidently in some distress.

"What's the matter?" asked Pippin.

The poor creature turned on him a face of tearful terror, and babbled some meaningless sounds, which again seemed to be "Bogle, google," and when the lions' cage was drawn in by the four horses his body shivered; and as the performance proceeded he sat as if chained to his seat by fright, moaning every now and then his senseless cry.

"The lions won't hurt you," said Pippin, "and they will soon take them away." But his terror did not seem to decrease.

What then was Pippin's surprise when this afflicted and terrified creature rose in his seat at the lion-tamer's invitation, and prepared to go into the ring. He was blubbering with emotion, and his poor ugly face was painfully contorted. Pippin laid a hand on him to hold him

back, but the lion-tamer caught sight of him at that moment, and said with a raised voice: "So! dere's a bright looking lad who wants a good tuck-oud. Gome along, plough-boy, you'd make a fine fat meal for de lions, bot dey shan't douch you, and you shall have de meal inshtead."

There was a laugh at this, but the audience was rather puzzled. The moon-faced youth in his countryman's garb was unknown to any of them, and his distress was evident. Yet there he was, preparing to undergo the ordeal that none of them would have undergone; and he would have climbed over the barrier by this time had not Pippin got hold of his frock.

"Don't go," he said. "They will find somebody else." He thought he was under some sort of fascination and that a tragedy might result if he was not held back.

"Now gome on, plough boy," said the tamer, more impatiently. "Don't keeb the ladies and chentlemen waiding. You are nod frighdened? No. Id is only thad you are hongry thad you make soch faces. De lions are hongry too. Hear dem roar. Bod dey will not harm you, wid me here."

"Google, bogle," said the unfortunate creature, turning to Pippin, and trying to draw his smock out of his hand.

"Now gome, whad are you waiting for?" said the tamer in a voice of sharp command. "Oh, your friend is keeb-ing you! A pair of fools inshtead of one fool! Perhabs your friend will gome den. You cry, bot you are brave; he does nod gry but he does nod dare to gome, all de same."

Pippin pushed the blubbering youth back on to his seat and stood up. "Yes, I will come," he said, and he stepped over the barrier into the ring. The audience cheered

lustily, but the showman scowled murderously at the poor fool who remained behind. It was only for an instant, and then he fixed his eyes upon Pippin, who stood in front of him, with an expression not much pleasanter, and Pippin understood what had been passing, and hated him.

"Ah, so!" he said. "You are hongry, what? You want de good bifshteg and de good wine more dan your friend. And you shall fill your shtomag. Bot you must nod ged dronk, you know. Your master does not objeck to a silly looking fool, dot is plain, but he vill not have a dronken fool. Now den, gome into my liddle barlour, and tug into de viddles."

This airy badinage amused the audience somewhat, and Pippin, who was not minded to play the butt for this man's humour, as it was evident that the simpleton had been trained to do, gathered up his wits, now he was in for it, and thought he would see whether he could get them on to his side.

He followed the tamer into the cage, not without a tremor, as the lions, appearing to resent his intrusion, growled and snarled. But his nerves were in good order, he knew that if there were any considerable danger he would not have been allowed to enter, and he put the lions as far as he could out of his mind as he sat down to the table.

Herr Schwenck seized an enormous napkin and tied it round his neck, talking all the time, and banging his head with no light hand first on one side and then on the other, at which the audience laughed consumedly. Pippin would willingly have murdered him, but he knew that he must keep his temper.

"Here, I say!" he said in a loud cheerful voice, guard-

ing his head, "Is that the way you treat people who come to dine with you in your country? We ought to have taught you better by this time."

The people laughed, and somebody cried out: "Go it, young 'un!" and the German, perhaps to hide his chagrin, took a turn of the lions, tapping and cowing them, during which Pippin, with a wink at the audience, took the bottle of wine off the table and put it under his chair. This action went home, and the tamer's fat face, as he turned round in unconcealed surprise, brought forth a roar of laughter, at his expense.

"Ah, you are a fonny man," he said, as he saw what had happened. "Bot you most not be too fonny, for de lions do not like it. Now let us have dot bottle on de table and drink fair, plough boy."

"All right, old beer-barrel," said Pippin, putting the bottle on the table, "but you don't look as if you could be trusted with a bottle, you know."

The audience, tickled by the not very subtle wit of the nickname, were now with him to a man. "One for you, beer-barrel!" they called out; and "Go it, youngster, stick up to him."

The man's face went purple. "What was dat you called me?" he said in a low voice as he took his seat at the table.

"What did I call you?" repeated Pippin in a loud one. "I called you old beer-barrel. You called me plough boy, you know."

The tamer recovered his temper with an effort. "Ah, you are a very fonny man, dot is plain," he said with ferocious geniality. "Now let us begin. First we will drink," and he poured out half a tumbler of red fluid from the

bottle into Pippin's glass. "And you like soda water wid it. So?" He took a syphon, and squirted the soda water from his side of the table at Pippin's glass so that it went all over him. It was done so quickly that Pippin started back, and the audience roared with delight. Then he seized the glass to throw its contents into the man's face; but missed it, for with an agility hardly to be expected he had sprung up instantly and, with harsh commands and taps of his leaded whip, was cowing the lions at the back of the cage, who had broken out into menacing clamour.

Pippin's heart stood still for a moment, for this note was very different from any he had yet heard from them. The tamer came back to the table and standing with his back to the audience pretended to wipe up the liquor he had split. "If you play de fool wid me, de lions will break out and kill us both," he said in a low voice, and his red face was a shade paler.

Pippin looked at him steadily. "Then don't play the fool with me," he said.

But now the ring-master came before the cage and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure we all admire the pluck of this young man in venturing into that den of ferocious beasts. I tell you candidly, I wouldn't do it myself. But he will no doubt eat his supper more comfortably outside it, and if Herr Schwenck will kindly release him I shall be honoured if he will eat it with me after the performance."

Hearty cheers from the audience. The tamer opened the door of the cage and remembered his rôle so far as to hold out his hand in farewell, as Pippin, ignoring it, slipped out. The cage was drawn off by the four horses, Herr Schwenck bowing and smiling horribly from the ring

and pursued out of it by groans and cries of "old beer-barrel!" Pippin, shaking hands with the ring-master, retired to his seat, the hero of the occasion, but found that the poor simpleton whom he had relieved of his cruel duty had left it.

And so ended the first part of the performance.

CHAPTER XIII

PIPPIN SUPS WITH THE RING-MASTER

The famous ride of Dick Turpin to York is a favourite subject for representation in a circus, and this performance was an excellent one, although it is doubtful whether the original highwayman went through all the feats and hairbreadth escapes here assigned to him.

Pippin thought he had never seen anything so enlivening. The man who took the part of Turpin was a fine rider, although he seemed to be suffering from a terrible cough, and a weakness which caused him to reel in his saddle after he had gone through any unusual motion. Pippin wondered if he were really ill, or whether this was part of the play, but there was so much else to enjoy that he did not concern himself deeply over the matter. Black Bess, the hero's horse, evoked his enthusiastic admiration. She was a splendid blood mare, in the pink of condition, and seemed to enjoy her part in the show, and to understand completely that her master must never be caught by his enemies.

Excitement followed excitement. In the scene in which the stage-coach, drawn by four bright bays, was held up by Turpin, Pippin recognised among the terrified passengers the beautiful face and form of the Countess di Rimini, and had an impulse to go to her rescue. In the episode of the leaping of the toll gate and the vegetable cart, which Black Bess took separately, although she did take them, gallantly, the part of the humorous coster-

monger was filled by little Joey. And in the famous scene of the Sheriff's dinner party, several old acquaintances appeared.

The Countess di Rimini was resplendent in pink silk and diamonds and would have graced any table, even a higher and wider one than this. The Fairy Firefly in black velvet and pearls was completely outshone by her and looked melancholy. Little Joey was there, and his behaviour, although laughable, would not have been permitted at most dinner tables. Signor Franginelli was there, as a young man of fashion, with a flaxen wig and an eyeglass. And among the guests was the poor simpleton, dressed up as a schoolboy, now apparently completely happy, and devoting all his attention to the viands, which were served in a manner not consistent with the usages of high society. The beefsteak pie, a real one, which had already appeared in the lion's den, did duty again, and was carved on the table by little Joey, who piled huge slices on the schoolboy's plate. He devoured them hastily, and, holding out his plate, said "More; more!" More was given him, and he devoured that, until he had finished the pie, and nobody else apparently had any, although they toyed with plates and glasses, and addressed each other in agreeable conversation.

The intrusion on this scene of revelry of Dick Turpin and Black Bess, with the Sheriff's Officers after them, was not explained by anything in the dialogue, but way was made for them, and they duly cleared the hospitable board, while above the noise and confusion that then arose Pippin thought he heard the schoolboy, now stuffed to repletion, crowing "Bogle, google," in tones of exultation.

The performance seemed to end somewhat abruptly.

Turpin and Black Bess staggered into the streets of York, represented by two shop fronts and a lamp post, Turpin tumbled out of the saddle and the mare lay down on the ground. Then Turpin crawled to her and began a speech indicative of his affection for the noble animal that had brought him through his dangers and given her life in his service. But the speech tailed off into silence. The man and the horse lay together quite still; and when the Sheriff and his officers clattered in, there seemed to be some hitch in the performance. But the Sheriff, none other than the ring-master, leapt from his saddle and cried, "Now, we have got the miscreant. He is overcome with grief. Varlets, bring hither a stretcher and bear him hence to the county jail."

A stretcher was brought, and Turpin, still motionless, was carried out. His face was very white. The streets of York were filled with the populace of York, a round dozen of them, who seemed to have little to say when the sheriff announced that the chase, and the play, was over.

Pippin waited for a few minutes in his place as the audience filed out of the big tent, and one of the grooms, now in shirt sleeves, came up to him and led him to an adjoining tent from which the animals and the performers had entered the ring. Here the ring-master, who was also the owner of the circus, was waiting, and shook hands with him again.

"Come along," he said. "I'm peckish, and I daresay you are too;" and he led the way through the confusion of men putting things straight after the performance to where several caravans were standing together in a roped off enclosure of the field.

"That was an unfortunate business of poor Brown's—

Turpin, you know," he said. "I think I got out of it well, though, don't you?"

"Yes," said Pippin, not quite understanding.

"He *would* go on," said the ring-master, "although it was plain he wasn't fit for it. However, this is the end. I'm sorry for the poor fellow, but it won't do to have the show spoilt by his fainting in the middle of it; and perhaps an accident."

"Is he seriously ill then?" asked Pippin.

"Consumption," said the ring-master. "He's a plucky fellow, but he's done for now. Well, I've done my best for him. Here we are. Come in, sir, come in."

Soon eight or nine elaborately decorated caravans stood in two rows, the ring-master's, larger and more elaborate than the rest, a little apart from them in the middle, like a general's tent. Pippin went up the steps and found himself in what appeared to be a good-sized room.

It was the most curious and the most attractive room he had ever seen. There was a good Turkey carpet on the floor. The little windows were curtained with muslin, the settees covered with a bright flowered chintz. A moveable table stood between them at the further end spread for supper, a good deal better spread than the Sheriff's dinner table in the play. There was a vase of daffodils in the middle of it, and a silver candlestick at each corner. There was a bookcase full of books, a little cottage piano, a cushioned wicker easy-chair, and a tiny fireplace with a fire in it. There were numerous lockers and drawers round the sides, and above them in every available space little glass cases of stuffed birds. Everything was scrupulously clean, and there was an air about it all that seemed to show that the ring-master used

this as his permanent home, and wanted no better one.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked his host, as Pippin gazed round him in wonder and admiration. "Didn't expect to see a house on wheels as good as this, eh?"

"No," said Pippin. "You have made yourself comfortable enough."

"That's my aim," said the ring-master cheerfully. "I have lived in this old cart for over twenty years, and when I once get inside I put the circus and everything to do with it out of my mind, and live like a gentleman. Ah, you're looking at the birds. All my own work. Took the nests and eggs, caught or shot the birds and set every one of them up."

Pippin looked at him in astonishment. Each little glass case contained a male and female bird with nest and eggs, cleverly disposed in surroundings as natural as possible. Some of them were extraordinarily life-like, and all the birds were set up in a way that could hardly have been bettered. Persistent pursuit, knowledge, and observation, and great manipulative skill, had gone to the making of the collection, and it was somewhat surprising to find it as the hobby of a circus proprietor.

The proprietor, and naturalist, stood there, still in his eighteenth century riding-dress of green velvet and gold lace, beaming with affability. He was a man of about fifty, big and active. His face was intelligent and not unkindly, though self-satisfaction showed in it as much as any quality.

"When we are on the road," he said. "I go off on my own account. We travel slowly and I get away into all kinds of country and catch up the old caravan in the

evening. But the worst of it is, I've got no room to put up any more specimens. That's the only drawback to these quarters. Now you have a look round—if you know anything about birds—and I will just get out of these togs."

A man came in at this moment with a hot dish and a bootjack, and Pippin examined the cases while his host changed his costume for a comfortable suit of flannels. "All pretty natural, eh?" he said, as the servant helped him off with his boots and spurs.

"You didn't find this wheatear's nest perched up on a tussock like this, did you?" asked Pippin.

The ring-master laughed. "Ah, I see you know something about it," he said. "You and I ought to get on together. William, fetch out a bottle of champagne. Here's the key."

The man went to a locker and produced the wine.

"But what about the wheatear's nest?" asked Pippin.

"Well, if you'll tell me how to show one where it's built, so as you can see the eggs, I'll thank you. See that bit of galvanized iron? I found the nest under that in a bank of shingle. I laid it on the tussock just to show it. There's the iron and the shingle all natural, just alongside. Now let's have our supper."

There was a savoury stew in a chafing dish. The servant opened the wine and went out, and they were left to themselves in the bright little room, with the firelight flickering on its shining brass work, on the books and the chintzes and the perching birds. It was difficult to believe that it was a house on wheels, standing in the middle of a field, part of the accessories of a travelling circus.

Pippin wanted to talk about the circus, the proprietor

about his country pursuits, and it was birds and eggs and bird and egg collecting that they discussed together at first.

"You are a countryman, of course," said the proprietor. "You have just the sort of knowledge which a man born in a town, as I was, never quite acquires; though I believe I am nearer to it than most men who work things out for themselves in after life."

"I have never been in a big town," said Pippin. "I have lived in one place all my life, and now I have come out to see something of the world."

"Then come and see something of it with us for a little," said the ring-master. "There is plenty doing wherever we go, and you and I could have some pleasant times together in the fields, as we move from one town to the other."

Pippin was moved to some excitement by this invitation, which was cordially given. He had lived so retired a life that for him there was still a glamour about everything that had to do with the life of the player, that resplendent being who in the glare of the footlights seems lifted so much higher than mere mundane mortals, and must surely in his refined existence, escape the dull and tedious hours that others less favoured have to undergo. And the beautiful eyes and exquisite figure of the Countess di Rimini rose up before him and warmed his thoughts. It would be a sweet privilege to become acquainted with that exalted creature, and to worship her respectfully.

"I should like to do that very much," he said. "I have never seen anything like this circus before. I think it is splendid."

"It is not at all a bad circus," said the ring-master. "I have given a great deal of thought to it, though it is not an occupation that interests me, as some others might. I should have liked to be a doctor, and I do know something about medicine, enough, at any rate, to enable me to dose my people when they need it, and save doctor's bills. I can set a bone, too, with anybody, and that is a useful accomplishment for a circus proprietor, though we are very free of accidents on the whole. I was brought up to the business, and it pays me very well. I could make more money, perhaps, if I settled down to run a show in a big town, but I don't want more money, and I like travelling about. Oh, it suits me very well. Do you know anything about horses?"

"I have had to do with them all my life," said Pippin. "You have some fine ones in your circus."

"A horse is an animal I never cottoned to much," said the ring-master; "and that's a curious thing for a man in my trade. I do get some good ones, but the dealers would get the better of me if it wasn't for Brown. Brown was the son of a rich farmer, and ran away with an equestrienne. His father wouldn't have anything more to do with him when he married her. He knows a lot about horses, and used to be one of the finest riders I have ever seen. Poor fellow! I don't know what on earth I shall do without him; and evidently he has come to the end of his tether now. However, I'm not going to bother about business to-night."

"Is his wife in the circus?" asked Pippin.

"Oh, yes. You saw her. The Fairy Firefly, you know. A good little woman, although, of course, rather past the fairy business. Still, I've kept her on for the sake of

Brown. There are plenty of youngsters I can get to take her place."

"How did—er—the Countess di Rimini come to take up the business?" asked Pippin with a blush.

"The Countess di—? Oh, she was born to it. She's the daughter of old Schwenck, you know, the lion man. Good-looking girl, don't you think so?"

"Yes, very," said Pippin, upon whom the information had come like a douche of cold water. "Then isn't she—er—married?"

"No. She's quite young; and the old man keeps her pretty close. She could have married people in our line, I dare say; but that isn't good enough for him. I say, you stood up to him well, in the cage. That was a plucky business. It's the first time he has ever had anybody offer from outside. Why did you do it?"

"That poor creature sitting next to me was frightened to death," said Pippin. "I didn't know who he was—I thought—"

"What, Bogle! You think he really is frightened, eh?"

"I should think it's plain enough," said Pippin shortly, his ire beginning to rise again as he thought of the cruelty of making play with such a victim.

"I suppose it is," said the ring-master. "I suppose it is. Of course, the poor devil is simple; and Schwenck brought him in. He couldn't get anybody else to let him knock him about as Bogle does. You didn't stand it, for instance, and I don't wonder. Schwenck is a bit of a brute. But if the poor devil really is frightened, I'll stop it. One of the other men can go in. Schwenck must pay him. He gets quite enough out of me."

Now Pippin, with the hot anger of youth upon whom

a slight has been laid, had desired earnestly to come to closer quarters with Schwenck, the lion-tamer; he had also earnestly desired, for a different reason, to come to closer quarters with the Countess di Rimini—no Countess at all, but a very pretty girl of the circus in masquerade. And to find that the man he would have made his enemy and the woman he would have liked for a friend were father and daughter was a severe shock to him.

"Is—is Schwenck's daughter—er—fond of him?" he asked fatuously.

The ring-master laughed. "Rosie Schwenck," he said, "is the only creature in the world that her father, who is not at all afraid of wild beasts, knuckles under to. She has a will of her own. They say she inherits it from her mother, who also tamed lions. And if sweet Rosie really wanted to marry into the circus, for instance, or to leave it, it would not be Schwenck who would stop her. Oh, I believe they are very good friends. Schwenck is a brute, as I said. But he does not dare to behave like a brute to her. Come in! Come in!"

It was the ring-master's attendant who had knocked, and now entered. "Brown is very bad, sir," he said. "Mrs. Brown would be very glad if you would kindly step round."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" said the ring-master, rising instantly. "William, get out a small bottle of champagne and bring it along after me. Come with me," he said to Pippin, and they went down the steps of the caravan and over the grass till they came to another elaborately decorated one at the end of the row. The ring-master knocked and went in, and Pippin followed him, wondering a little what he was there for, but unwilling, out of curiosity, to wait outside.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST RIDE

The interior of the caravan, though nothing to be compared in point of luxury with the proprietor's, was convenient enough for a travelling home. A diminutive looking stove with brightly polished pots and pans about it, a half open cupboard with plates and glasses and a loaf of bread on its shelves, clothes hanging on pegs, and other articles of domestic use, showed that it was living-room, bed-room, kitchen, larder and pantry in one for its occupants. But every inch of storage room was made use of and nothing was out of its place, and it was surprising what an amount of space was left over for its occupants, who would certainly be able to make themselves comfortable in it, if comfort depended on their quarters alone.

But there was bitter trouble in this cosy box of a home, sorrow for the poor middle-aged woman who, with the paint that had lately given her some illusion of youth still on her face, stood by the bed at the farther end of the compartment; and quickly approaching death for the man who was lying on it, breathing painfully, his pale wasted face and hollow eyes showing plainly how far the disease which he had fought up to the last had won on him.

Pippin stood just inside the doorway, while the ringmaster went immediately up to the bed and sitting down beside it, took the sick man's wrist in his, saying something cheerfully commonplace as he did so. It was the

soothing self-reliant doctor's manner, imitated to perfection, and it was difficult to avoid the conviction that to assume it gave him considerable pleasure, although his attitude lacked nothing in sympathy.

"It was the last ride," said the man in a low hoarse voice, with a faint attempt at a smile. "I'm going now. I can't stave it off any longer."

"Going?" said the ring-master, pocketing his gold watch. "Not you, Brown. You want a rest, that's all. You've been doing too much. I ought not to have let you go on; but you would do it, you know."

"I told him it was madness," said the woman. "He has not been fit for it these weeks past, and to-night he could hardly sit in the saddle. Oh, why did you let him go on? You knew about it. You knew how bad he was."

She turned an accusing face on the ring-master. She looked old beyond belief. An artificial pink rose from the wreath she had torn off clung to her carefully dressed hair; her painted face was lined, and raddled with her tears; from beneath a half-fastened morning dress of dark serge, hanging limply, showed pink stockings and slippers bound with ribbon.

Pippin wondered too why the ring-master, knowing what he claimed to know of illness, had allowed a man to come to this extremity in his service, and he remembered that it was not until he himself had remonstrated that he had announced his intention of stopping the cruelty with which the poor simpleton whom they called "Bogle" was treated. But now, as then, his amends were ready to hand. He seemed to be a kind man, but one whom kindness did not lead him to take responsibility for other people until his duty was pointed out to him.

"No good talking of what's past," he said. "You and your husband had your own way. He'll get better. He wants a rest, and he shall have it; and you too, Mrs. Brown. To-morrow I and my friend here will go into the country and find some nice farm-house where you can stay and be quiet together for as long as you like. I'll arrange it all for you, and you will have no worry, and no expense. Milk and cream and pure air, that's what Brown wants, and it won't do you any harm either."

The sick man's face had lighted up. "That's good of you," he said. "If I'm going to die I should like to die in a farm-house. Find one where I can see the ricks from my window, and the horses going to the pond to be watered, and the ducks in the mud, and hear the cows—coming in, and—"

A fit of coughing stopped him. His wife raised him and held his head to her breast, and a handkerchief to his mouth, which came away red.

The ring-master's man came in with the champagne, which he had opened. "Have you got plenty of milk for the night?" asked the ring-master, turned physician.

It seemed there was very little milk, and Pippin offered to go and get some, although at that time of night it was difficult to know where he could get it.

"Thank you," said the ring-master. "Take this jug and go round to the other caravans and tents. They will each give you a little."

Pippin did as he was bid, rather pleased even at that time at the idea of seeing the other performers of the circus in their domestic surroundings. A few of them had gone to bed, but most were eating their suppers or putting their things away for the night, for in such quarters as

theirs order is essential for comfort. There was not one of them who was not deeply concerned at their comrade's state, and not one who did not contribute every drop of milk he had, although there was little left from the evening's supply, and Pippin had visited a dozen tents and caravans before he was able to return with his jug full.

He found the clown, Joey, playing hymn tunes on a concertina, an elderly solemn little man in private life, with a fat bustling little wife whom Pippin recognized as having been present at the sheriff's dinner party, and two pretty children who with others had come into the ring on tiny ponies and performed an equestrian quadrille, dressed as cavaliers and ladies. The acrobatic family were busy making up their caravan for the night, the father sitting on the steps outside. Signor Franginelli and three other male performers were playing cards. They had no milk. If it had only been whisky, they said, they would have given their last drop. They ended their game and accompanied Pippin to the other caravans, and to one or two of the tents, until his jug was full.

"Maddock ought not to have let him go on," said one of them. "He's a good boss, and he's kind-hearted enough, but he only thinks about himself and his funny amusements."

They all agreed to this, but Pippin asked why the sick man's wife had let him go on.

"Oh, poor devils! it's a question of money," said Signor Franginelli, whose real name was Smithers. "It's the workhouse for them now. Besides, she couldn't stop him."

"Maddock will see after him now, all right," said another. "He won't let them go to the workhouse. I say, are you going to try here? This is Schwenck's."

Pippin hung back, but one of the young men took the jug and knocked at the door of the caravan.

The lion-tamer's daughter came to the door. She had on a loose print wrapper, and her thick hair was coiled up loosely for the night. Pippin standing in the shadow of the van wondered how he could ever have thought of her as a married aristocrat. She looked very pretty, but she was quite a young girl, and not aristocratic. She said they had a little milk left and went inside to get it.

"I say!" said Smithers. "It was first-class—the way you stood up to old Schwenck. We all hate the old beast. He's furious with you, though, and so is Rosie."

"Why?" asked Pippin.

But the girl came back with the jug, and her father with her. "You are welcome to de milk," he said. "Bot it is no use. Dot man is on his last legs. He will not ride again."

Then he caught sight of Pippin, and his heavy brows drew together in a ferocious frown.

"Oh, it is you," he said. "You and I will talk togeder, my friend, to-morrow. I am not treated de way you treated me widout saying nodings about it, or doing nodings eider."

"I shall be quite ready to talk with you to-morrow," said Pippin. "But I will take back the jug now."

"Is that the young idiot who nearly got himself and you killed, father?" asked the girl in a clear voice. "I should give him a horse-whipping if I were you." Then she turned her back and went into the van and Pippin took his jug.

"That's Rosie!" said one of the young men with a giggle. "Sweet Rosie Schwenck! They're a pair."

When Pippin got back to the caravan in which the sick man lay he found Maddock, the ring-master, and the poor wife with very grave faces. Brown's thin cheeks, which had been so pale and hollow, were flushed, and he was talking quickly, in a low voice. Maddock sat by the bed, and tried every now and then to give him champagne, which he waved away with his restless hands, and had spilt on the sheets. His wife was at his pillow trying to soothe him, and crying, as she murmured, "Lie still, dear, lie still. I am here with you."

"I've sent for a doctor," Maddock whispered, "but I think he is going." Pippin sat down on a locker, and there was silence, except for the monotonous chatter of the dying man, which never ceased.

His disjointed sentences at first carried no meaning but presently Pippin, growing used to his voice, could make out a sentence here and there, and then nearly everything.

The circus, which had been his daily life for so many years, had slipped out of his mind completely, and he was back again in the home of his boyhood, in the quiet country, among the fields and lanes.

"Get the towels, Tom," he was saying. "It will be fresh and cold in the pool. There's the big trout. There; can't you see? Just in the shadow of the rock. Lean over him—gently now—tickle for him. Ah, he's away, you made a splash. The water's boiling—come out. Boiling, mother. The kettle's boiling. Father is in the five acres. They have just carried the last load. . . . Ah! dear old father! I wish you would speak to me, father. I've told you all about it. She's as good as gold. You will love her if you will just let her come and see you. Father, don't look like that. Say something.

"Moses in the bulrushes. There's the little baby in the cradle. See, Tom? No, not on Sunday. Mustn't play on Sundays, Tom. Look at the pictures. Hush! don't wake father. Hear the clock tick. Sit quiet. Listen to the old bee buzzing. He's just come in from the pinks. Isn't it hot, Tom? Mother has gone to the dairy. It is cool in the dairy. Come quietly then and don't wake father. He'll be angry.

"Here we go, Tom. Don't fall off. Hold on tight when he puts his head down to drink. Father! I'm slipping! I can't stick my knees in. Dobbin's back's too big. Why, it's Charlie! I can stick my knees in now. Oh, father! my very own? But Tom must ride him too, mustn't you, Tom, when you get older. But you can't, Tom. You're dead. How's that? You were here just now. Can't you get up, Tom? Don't groan so. Poor White Stocking! His back's broken. We'll soon have him off you. I told you not to ride him. You are not strong enough. Oh, Tom, Tom, what will father say? He loved you best."

He lay quiet for a time. His wife cried softly, holding his hand in hers. Maddock sat silent by the bed-side and looked at his watch every now and then. Outside, the noise and movement had subsided. The circus people were sleeping or preparing to sleep. It was very quiet.

An hour went by and the doctor had not come, nor had Maddock's messenger returned.

Then the sick man began to mutter again, incoherently at first, but by and by in a louder voice, sentences appearing and gradually becoming more connected. His whole life seemed to be passing in front of him, sunny and shel-

tered at first, as he babbled of the sights and sounds of the farm yard, the garden, and the orchard, the woods and hedgerows in the spring, birds nesting, bathing in the cool stream, the village church, cricket on the village green, Christmas time in the big farm-house, snowballing and skating—Pippin saw his life as it had been, much like his own, happy and active, abounding in health; he felt as if he had known his father, stern, rather terrifying, but with a power of arousing admiration and affection, his mother, busy and warm-hearted, his younger brother, bright and eager, over whom lay the shadow of early death.

He saw the shadow deepening over the big house and wide fields, the son restless and discontented, as he himself had been, but with more reason: his mother sad and dispirited, his father violently morose. And then his passion for the girl of the circus, innocent enough, and his pleading with his parents to take him back into their favour; then a clean break and no more talk of his early home or of his father and mother.

The life of the circus then, always moving from place to place, plodding along roads interminably, the buying and breaking of horses, his schemes and ideas for performances in the ring, no glamour, a rather hard life of work and continuous movement, but not an unhappy one, some friendships and always apparent the affection for the wife who had cost him his home and his inheritance.

The night wore on. Maddock's servant returned and whispered that he had ridden miles to find the doctor, who had been summoned into the country and would come as soon as he was free. It was plain then that he could do nothing when he did come. The sick man was sinking.

He lay for long periods comatose, and then talked on in a low monotonous murmur.

About three o'clock in the morning, after a long period during which nothing of what he said could be understood, his voice became louder and clearer. His cheeks were hectic, his eyes wide open. Pippin, looking at him, thought that he had taken a turn for the better, as if consciousness had returned to him, and as if he were stronger.

"Now quiet, my beauty! In a minute, in a minute! On you go then! It's you they are cheering, Black Bess, not me. Over you go! Ah, they can't follow us there. You took it like a bird. Oh, let's get on . . . get on. A gallop and a jump and then stand still . . . it's always the same. Come away, the way is clear at last. At last. Now settle down to it, my brave girl. York is miles ahead, but we'll outstrip them. Gallop, gallop, gallop, under the moon. Ah, the gate's shut and they're close behind us. Steady now! Pull yourself together. I've hit him; the way's clear. No! Good girl, good girl! Now, we'll gain on them. But they're fresh and you've galloped for miles, my black beauty. Here, take a drink, we've got a minute to spare. On again. Ah, that's better. This is glorious. We've never done this before, Black Bess. It's our last ride together. Let's get away from everything. We'll find Tom at York, Bess. Tom and White Stocking. They're not really dead. And father. If you can get there he'll be so pleased. Kitty and I can go home together. Such a good feed you'll have in the old stable, and I'll show Kitty the house and the garden when I've made you all snug. Keep it up, Black Bess. It's the last ride. Now, pull up for a second. Do you hear them?

Yes, they're gaining, but we'll outstrip them yet. On again; only a few miles more. Ah, my beauty! You're nearly done. Now wait . . . quite still! There's old fat Snoring in front. What is he doing here? I'll wing him. Ah, ha! That's done the trick. Now, on again! Snoring isn't hurt. They'll wait a bit with him. There are the lights. Only a mile more. Keep up, keep up. Now we've done them. They can't catch us now. Why, there's Tom on White Stocking. I knew he wasn't dead. Tom! Tom! He's waving to us. And father! He wants us home. . . . Home, . . . Bess, . . . Kitty . . . we're home at last."

He sank back on his pillow. His wife, weeping bitterly, drew his head on to her breast, heedless of the blood that gushed from his mouth and stained her gown. But he had ridden his last ride. He was at home again.

CHAPTER XV

PIPPIN JOINS THE CIRCUS

Pippin might have slept until noon the next day, but he was aroused about nine o'clock by a vigorous shake of the shoulder, and sat up in bed to find Maddock, the circus proprietor, standing over him.

"You sleep sound, my young friend," he said. "I knocked at your door and could not wake you, so I made bold to come in. Put on your clothes and come down to me. I have something important to say to you."

He went out of the room, and Pippin jumped from his bed and dressed quickly. The events of the previous night, forgotten in his deep sleep, came back to him. He had left the poor fairy of the circus weeping over her dead, and Maddock consoling her, with more tact than might have been expected of him, though in face of such grief and such a loss it was little enough that he could do. Pippin had never looked upon death before, and he had crept away to his inn, sad at heart and with a feeling of awe at the sight of that great mystery. His night's sleep and the bright new day had already lessened the effect of what he had seen, and as he dressed he wondered what the proprietor had to say to him.

Maddock was in the parlour of the inn, making friends with the landlord and his wife, who were pleased to get the story of the tragedy that had occurred from the lips of such an authority.

"Riding and lepping one minute, cold and dead the

next," said the landlord. " 'Tis well said that all flesh is grass." And his wife said, "Ah, that's a true word, and here's the gentleman for his breakfast."

"Now, look here," said the ring-master to Pippin when they were alone together. "Why I didn't think of it last night I don't know; but you must understand that when I am called on to play the doctor all else goes out of my head. I think that poor fellow went out of the world as comfortably as if a regular practitioner had had the handling of him. What do you think?"

Pippin thought it was quite possible, and wondered what was coming next.

"Now it has occurred to me that you are the very man to fill his place," said Maddock. "The idea came to me as I was shaving. What do you say?"

"What, ride in the circus?" exclaimed Pippin.

"Yes. Bless you, there's nothing low about that. You put on a fine suit of clothes and you bestride a fine horse. And you are the hero of the evening. There's not a girl in any place we perform in that won't be dying to make friends with you. You won't do a hand's turn. The stablemen will look after your horse. You will be a gentleman, inside the ring and out of it."

"I wasn't thinking of that," said Pippin, who was not a little moved at the prospect held out to him, in which he was young enough to scent honour and glory; for though he had a shrewd head on his shoulders and was as modest as becomes a youth, he had not yet gone past the years in which it is pleasant to play a gallant part in the eyes of the world and to sniff the applause that comes of it. "I should like it," he said. "But I don't know whether I could."

"Why? You are your own master, you told me. You would see more of life travelling with us than walking by yourself. You would be put to no expense for living. In fact I would pay you something, after a short trial. Come now, it isn't a chance that everybody would get; but I have taken to you, and I should like to have you with me."

"I would come if I thought I could play the part."

"You can ride and jump, can't you?"

"I could do that part of it, and with such a mount I should enjoy it. But the words—"

"Oh, the words! There are very few of them. You can learn them in an hour, and we will have a rehearsal to give you your cues. It is an easy job, and it would be all I should ask you to do except to give an eye to the horses generally, and every now and then to pick up a likely new one. You have had the same sort of training as poor Brown, and you might be as useful to me as he was. If you are, there is a good living in it for you. And I am quite sure that you and I could get on well together. Give it a trial, at any rate."

So Pippin consented, and went back with his new friend to the field where the circus was encamped.

He found a scene of great confusion in progress. The great tent in which the performance was held had already been struck, and with the other tents used as temporary stables and quarters for the attendants and work people, was in course of being loaded on to wagons. Men and women and children were here and there about the caravans, those of them who had appeared in brave costumes the night before looking as if they had suddenly descended several steps of the social ladder, but also as if they did

not mind having done so; for it was a fine spring morning and they were about to take the road. That was the part of their life that did not pall, when the sun shone and the wind sang and they went on through the green country. The lights and the applause of the evening were not to be compared with it, and it was better to be yourself, plain John or Kate of the common people, with your bread to earn and your friends to keep, than to play at lords and ladies, though that was pleasant too, in youth and for a time.

As Pippin came into the encampment with the master of the circus, they met a sad little procession. The body of the man whose place Pippin was to take, enclosed in a wooden shell, was being carried away on a cart. By its side walked the widow, already in a black dress and a black bonnet. The gilded and emblazoned caravan in which she and her husband had lived their married life, travelling from place to place with much external splendour, and within some homeliness and contentment, was her home no longer. In that life of constant movement there could be no lingering in surroundings dear to memory. Death had severed her from them in a few hours, and with her husband's body she took away the few possessions that had been his and hers, and left the gilded van to be occupied by others.

The men who were at work in the field left off as the coffin was drawn past them, and stood in silence with heads bared. Some women pressed round the poor widow and bade her farewell, with tears and words of sympathy. They made way for the circus proprietor as he and Pippin entered the enclosure, and Maddock shook hands with the woman and talked to her for a little. When he rejoined

Pippin he said, "If she wants to come back, I'll find a place for her. But I don't think she will. She'll be all right for a time, anyhow, and then we will see what we can do for her." From which Pippin gathered that he had behaved generously according to his lights; and he afterwards learnt that this was the case.

But the Fairy Firefly he saw no more. Creeping age and sudden sorrow had made an end of her, and it was a Fairy Rosebud, a slip of a girl with smooth pink cheeks and a laughing mouth, who took her place in the ring and leapt through the hoops of flame and the hoops of roses.

Presently all was ready and the circus took the road. First went the carts with the gear and the men who looked after it, for they had to be at the place where the night's halt was to be made and have everything ready for the reception of the circus proper. When they had moved off and been given a clear start, the circus horses led the way for the second contingent, some led by grooms, some ridden. Then came the caravans, each drawn by two horses, and driven by the men who occupied them, their families or companions walking by the side or busy with their duties within. The great elephant lumbered out swinging his trunk, with his keeper seated on his head.

The lions' cage, closely boarded, was near the end of the procession, and behind it Herr Schwenck's van, which was driven by a groom, and neither the lion tamer nor his daughter was to be seen. At the end of all came the proprietor's caravan, more gorgeous outside than the rest, and a smaller one behind it which was used as a kitchen and store-room for himself alone and for quarters for his servant. Mr. Maddock travelled as comfortably as any

man in the country, and his dwelling place was always at hand, though he paid no rent for it.

When he had seen the last of his belongings off the ground he invited Pippin inside his van. "You will like to walk or ride as a rule," he said, "but we have a good deal to settle to-day, and had better pretend we are sitting in a room indoors. When there is work to be done you must learn to forget that you are travelling."

It was not very easy. The sun shone in at the little muslin-curtained windows, trees and hedgerows passed by, the fresh air came in through the door, of which the upper half was open, invitingly, and the gentle swaying of the great van, although its rubber tires and strong springs of steel took off as much as possible of the motion, conveyed the idea of pleasant progress. Pippin would have liked to be out of doors; he had come to dislike the feeling of confinement within walls; and the idea came to him that he had been unwise to bind himself to any occupation, however attractive it might be. But he had done so, for a time at any rate, and he resigned himself to the loss of his freedom and set himself with a sigh to his new duties.

Maddock gave him a manuscript copy of the words he would have to speak in his part of Dick Turpin. There were not many of them, for his appearances as a rule explained themselves. "You will have plenty of time to learn it all by to-morrow," said Maddock; "and we will have a rehearsal in the afternoon."

There was to be no performance that evening. They were timed to reach the next town at noon on the following day, and would find everything prepared for them.

"Now we will go on to the wardrobe van," said the proprietor, "and get you fitted out for the part."

They walked on together along the line of moving caravans which had begun to straggle a little. They passed that of the family of acrobats. The elder son was driving the horses, the mother was sitting in the doorway sewing, and the father with the younger children was walking.

"What is it this morning?" asked Maddock as they passed.

"Mental arithmetic," replied the acrobat. He had a little book in his hand, and Maddock and Pippin walked with him until he had propounded a problem concerning the consumption of plums by a greedy boy called Tom and an abstemious boy called Harry, and received the correct answer. "Good girl, Molly! go up top," he said as one of them lit upon it, and the youngest child, a pretty little girl of about ten with dark curls and big eyes, took her place next to him, elbowing out an elder sister.

"A very good fellow, Polder," said the proprietor as they walked on. "He teaches his children like that every morning. In our life it is difficult to see that the children are properly educated. But there's no trouble about his."

They passed the lions' cage, and in front of it the van of their owner. Herr Otto Schwenck was sitting in the doorway reading a paper. Maddock greeted him cheerfully, and he looked up, but when he saw Pippin his face became red and angry.

"Ah, it is you, is it?" he said. "If you gome near me I will give you a horsevipping."

"No, you won't, Schwenck," said Maddock. "This gentleman is one of us now. He is taking poor Brown's place. I'll have no quarrelling among my people. You know that well enough."

The German rose, and holding on by the door frame,

poured out a flood of excited guttural language. "You vill have, you vill not have, Mr. Maddog!" he exclaimed. "Vot is it you are saying to me? You are not my master. You mind your own business. Dis young man and me vill seddle togeder. You saw him vid your own eyes throw a glass of vine at my face, and dot is a ding I vill pud up vid from no man. And let me tell you dis, Mr. Maddog, if I had nod had my vits aboud me, dere vould have been a very nasty accidend. If de lions vos to see me attacked in der cage dey vould be on me in a flash, soh! and dere vould nod have been moch of dis fine chentleman left; nor of your circus, ven de facts became known."

"Yes, that's all right, Schwenck," said Maddock. "I saw that and stopped the business. And you got the beasts under. No harm was done, and it won't occur again. Don't make a fuss about nothing."

"Ye call it nodings!" cried the angry tamer. "You saw him wid your own eyes trow a glass of vine at my face; and you heard him call me an obrobrious name."

"Well, he was only giving back what he got," said Maddock, "but I dare say he will apologize for it and end the matter."

"No, I won't apologize," said Pippin hotly. "Why on earth should I? Any one would think, to hear Mr. Schwenck or whatever his name is, that I had insulted him without any provocation. What about him banging me about the head and squirting soda water at me and calling me plough boy?"

"Well, aren't you a plough boy?"

It was the Countess di Rimini, otherwise Miss Rosie Schwenck, who had asked the question. She had come to the door of the van, and was looking at Pippin with a face

of cool scorn. She wore a coat and skirt of blue serge and a hat of dark brown straw, and if she did not in that costume look like an Italian Countess she did look a very pretty girl with a beautiful figure, although her attractions were not increased in Pippin's eyes by the look with which she surveyed him. He dropped his eyes and made no reply to her.

But Maddock said: "Now then, Rosie, we don't want any of your impudence. Captain Glanville is a gentleman as any one can see with eyes in their head; and yours are clear enough."

"Captain Glanville!" she repeated with infinite contempt. "A pretty Captain! He is no more a Captain than I am."

"—a Countess," added Pippin, raising his eyes to her, and she turned her back and went into the van. "But I'm not going to be called Captain Glanville," he said to the proprietor. "I won't take a style that I've no right to."

"You don't want to appear under your own name, I suppose. You are the son of a rich country gentleman travelling for your pleasure, and if you like to amuse yourself with us for a time it is not to be brought up against you. Glanville is a good enough stage name. I thought of it this morning as I was shaving. And as for the captain—you can take it or leave it as you please."

"I will leave it," said Pippin. "But I don't object to the Glanville. I don't care about using my own name, although when you say my father is—"

"Then that's settled," Maddock broke in rather hurriedly. "Schwenck, I've something else to say to you. Mr. Glanville is quite right. It is ridiculous to suppose

you are going to get a gentleman of quality inside your den of lions and treat him as you did without his rounding on you. And not only that—"

"How vos I to know he vos a gentleman?" interrupted the tamer sulkily. "He does not dress like one. But we vill let bygones by bygones. Only I tell him dis, dat he vos very near his death last night, and me too."

His attitude, although still the reverse of amiable, had undergone a change, perhaps as the result of Maddock's description of Pippin's social status, a description which nothing that had been told him warranted. But the public, which loves a play-actor, loves him all the better if there is reason to suppose that he is also something besides, and Maddock's eye was keenly alive to the tastes of his patrons; also, it appeared, to those of the lion-tamer.

"Well, it's all over now," he said, "and nothing more is to be said about it. And look here, Schwenck, Bogle is frightened to death of the lions. You can't use him any more."

"What, dot fool?" exclaimed the tamer. "Is he a gentleman travelling for his pleasure? Vot nonsense! He is my servant and I shall use him as I please."

"No, you won't," said Maddock. "He'll have a fit inside the cage one of these days, and then there'll be a pretty commotion. You must get one of the men, and pay him. Now mind, Bogle doesn't go into the cage again;" and he walked on with Pippin and left the tamer to digest his ultimatum.

"I know how to treat Schwenck," he said. "Be friendly but firm; and that's my rule with everybody. There's very little friction, all things considered, and if there is I can always stop it. Hulloa, Bogle! Had a good breakfast?"

The idiot boy—he was little above that in intellect—was coming back towards Schwenck's van carrying a pail of water. He had an old scarlet coat and a hat with several feathers in it. He grinned all over his great foolish face at the question, and said: "More! more!"

"No more till dinner time," said Maddock. "You are not to go inside the lion's cage any more. You'll be pleased at that, won't you?"

He did not seem to understand what was said to him. But at the word lion his face changed and a shadow of that look of terror which Pippin had seen before came over it. Then he carried his eyes to Pippin's face—he had not looked at him before—and his face changed again and expanded into a broad grin. "Bogle, google," he said and nodded his head vigorously in token of gratitude and admiration.

"Poor devil!" said Maddock as they walked on. "I don't know where Schwenck picked him up, but he makes him useful. I pay him a shilling or two a week as well, and he spends it all on food. There would be money in him as a champion eater, but I don't care for that class of business. This is Mother Bunch's van."

They went up the stairs and into the van. Its interior was very small, for all round the sides were drawers and lockers, and from hooks a great variety of garments hung suspended. An old woman sat at a table with a sewing machine before her and a great billowy mass of pink muslin, and by her side stood a pretty child of fourteen or so, in an ugly tartan dress.

"Well, Fairy Rosebud," said Maddock, taking her little chin in his fingers. "You've got a lift up, haven't you? Going to be a good girl and practise hard, are you?"

"Yes, sir," said the girl, showing her white teeth. "I shall be able to do it barebacked in a week, I think."

"I don't like these bareback turns, Mr. Maddock," said the old woman, shaking her head. "Mr. Brown didn't like them neither and wouldn't let Mrs. Brown try. I've half a mind not to let Lizzie take it on."

"Oh, Granny!" said the girl, "if you practise well and are very careful, there's no danger at all; and it looks so much better than jumping about on a board, which any one can do."

"Looks!" grumbled the old woman. "It's all looks with you."

"And so it ought to be in a public performance," said Maddock. "You're a good girl, Lizzie. You practise well, and when you can do the turn safely barebacked you shall have more money. Your Granny won't object to that, I know. Now here's Mr. Glanville going to play Turpin, Mother Bunch. What have you got for him?"

As a result of the investigation that followed Pippin found himself the owner of a riding suit of dark green, a three-cornered hat to match, a brown wig with a black ribbon, and a pair of high boots with plated spurs, and retired to Maddock's van to try them on. He could not help being pleased with his appearance as he stood up in them, and Maddock said that with a little alteration of the coat, and a lace tie and ruffles, he would look as handsome a Dick Turpin as had ever ridden the ring.

There was a halt at midday and he and Maddock lunched together. "Where am I to sleep?" asked Pippin.

"I'll give you a shake down here to-night," said Maddock. "I'm having Brown's van thoroughly cleaned out—poor fellow! I want to use it partly as an office, but, bar

that, you can have it for yourself. There'll be plenty of room, and you will be more comfortable there than chumming in with somebody else. You can feed with me. We shall get on very well together, I'm sure, and we have plenty of tastes in common."

These dispositions for his welfare pleased Pippin. Maddock was treating him very well. He had offered him a salary, which was not very big, but seemed to him handsome, considering that his expenses would be nil; and, if he "suited," more was to be paid to him after a month. And it would be good to have his quarters to himself, especially such fascinating ones. Everything smiled on him, and he set himself arduously to learn his part, sitting alone in Maddock's van, which swung on steadily during the afternoon between the fields and hedgerows.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIRST HALT

The Circus halted for the night on the outskirts of a large village. Maddock's agent had hired a grass field from a farmer, and there the caravans were ranged in a row as before, and the tents for the horses and for the attendants were set up in an orderly camp. Maddock was a skilful general. Everything was done on an arranged plan. Every one had certain duties to perform, and, camping as they did on new ground most nights of the year, there was as little friction as might be. At five o'clock the front of the procession filed into the field; at six there was a little hamlet of tents and vans, which might have been there for a month past, and all that remained for its occupants to do was to procure provisions for the evening and the next morning.

Pippin, whose mental labours were over for the time being, lent a hand with the horses, which were stabled in long tents already put up by the advance party. He found Black Bess with the rest, and the man who was in charge of her said that she didn't seem to take to her feed. Brown had always fed her himself, and she missed him.

Pippin went up to her, and she turned her beautiful lean head towards him, with its silky restless ears and delicately carved nostrils, and in her eye he seemed to see a question that she could not utter. Where was the man whom she had served and who had cherished her day by

day for so long, and what was he, a stranger, doing there in his place? He fondled her and spoke gently to her, and she nosed him and seemed half satisfied that he meant her well. He told the stableman that he was to take Brown's place for the present and that he would look after the mare as Brown had done.

"What, you!" said the groom, looking at him. "What about the other, then?"

"What other?" asked Pippin.

"Why, him as was to have had the job when poor Brown got past it?"

"I don't know anything about that," said Pippin. "Who was to have had it?"

"Oh, it's none of my business," said the man, moving off. "You'll find out."

Pippin was a little disturbed at this, although, when he thought of it, it was plain that some provision must have been made for such a contingency as had occurred, and that his having dropped from the clouds at the right moment would be to the disappointment of some one who might have hoped for the reversion of Brown's part. He thought that Maddock might have warned him of this. He had started with the circus on bad terms with the lion-tamer, and apparently with his daughter, and he did not want to have another enemy to deal with.

As he went out of the tent where the horses were stabled he met the young man Smithers, otherwise Signor Frangi-nelli, who, with a companion, both carrying big jugs, were going off to the village to get the material for their even-ing refreshment. Smithers had been friendly the night before when he had gone round the camp to get milk for the dying man, but now, when he caught sight of Pippin,

he stuck a thumb in the armhole of his waistcoat, threw back his head, and changed his walk to a strut. "Oh, here's me lord," he said. "Been to look at his hunters in the stable, by jove! Haw!" The last expression represented a clearing of the throat, as it were, by a man of high station.

Pippin realized at once that Smithers was the man he had unwittingly displaced, and that he felt sore about it.

"Why, what's the matter?" he said. "We were very good friends last night, I thought."

Smithers took off his cloth cap with a sweep, and bowed low. "Oh, no, me lord," he said in a tone of withering humility. "It is not to be expected that a fine gentleman like you should make friends with an individual so far beneath you as your humble. But allow me to thank you for the condescension all the same, rat you!" He ended with sharp vehemence, and glared at Pippin out of a pair of faint brown eyes with great ferocity. His straw-coloured hair, which had been crimped and frizzed out for the purposes of his share in the entertainment, hung limply over a narrow brow, and a somewhat receding chin diminished the effect of his anger, which, however, seemed deep enough to cause him great discomfort.

"Come on, then," said Pippin. "Out with it! What's the trouble?"

"Trouble!" echoed Smithers, with a snort of derision. "What's the trouble? Here's an individual working hard to keep himself, and getting little enough pay for it, and is promised, or as good as, a step up when another individual is past his work. And what happens? An individual comes ladida-ing in and sneaks his job. That's the trouble, me lord, and now you know; and you know what

I think of you, and it isn't as much as you think of yourself by a very long chalk, and that it isn't either."

"You mean you were to have taken Brown's place," said Pippin, "and I have got it instead."

"Oh, come on, Jim," said Smithers to his friend. "What's the good of talking to the fool? I'll be even with him some other way." And he made as if to continue an interrupted journey.

"Here, wait a minute," said Pippin, planting himself in his path. "I'm sorry you are disappointed, but you mustn't call me names, you know."

"Ho, mustn't I, me lord?" said the incensed Smithers.

"No, Signor," replied Pippin.

"Ha! ha! very funny! Very funny indeed! That's the trick you tried on with old Schwenck, and he gave you a bat on the head for it. I'll do the same if I get any of your lip; so now you know."

"No, I don't know," said Pippin, beginning to get annoyed. "But you can try it on now if you like."

They stood glaring at one another, two very young men both ready for a quarrel, Smithers the more angry of the two, Pippin the more ready for the possible result of his anger. Smithers' companion thought it time to intervene. He was a stocky little man with a good-natured face. "Well, I suppose you ain't going to fight it out now," he said. "I want my beer."

"Go and get your beer, then," said Pippin, stepping inside, "and don't speak to me like that again."

What reply the angry Smithers might have made was cut short by the appearance of Miss Rosie Schwenck, who had been watching the passage from the platform of her father's van, and now strolled unconcernedly across the

grass towards them. She was behind Pippin, and he was first aware of her presence when she said in her clear cool voice: "You mustn't hurt Captain Glanville, Smithers. He will tell Maddock if you do anything to him."

Pippin turned round, his face aflame. The girl had made an impression on him, and her scorn was harder to bear. And he was very young. "He is not going to hurt me," he said. "It will be the other way about, if he doesn't mend his manners."

"Oh, will it?" exclaimed Smithers rhetorically, and Rosie Schwenck said: "We shan't come to you for a lesson in manners. Come along, Smithers, I am going for a little walk, and you and Fraddle can come with me if you like."

She moved off, apparently quite sure of being followed, and Smithers and his friend followed her, leaving Pippin by himself, angry, but not knowing in the least how he could overcome the prejudice against him.

It was small balm to his wounded spirit to see the grinning face of Bogle advancing towards him. He was accompanied by a little girl, the daughter of Joey the clown, and carried a big white jug. He poured out a flood of his apparently meaningless bogle googles, as he came up to Pippin, grinning all the while, in great good humour.

"He says," said the little girl, "that he is not to go into the lion's cage any more, and he is very glad of it."

"I am very glad too," said Pippin. "Where are you both going?"

"Bogle, google," said the simpleton repeatedly.

"We are going to get milk and eggs," said the child, "and he wants you to come with us. He likes you."

So Pippin went with them out of the field and through the farm steading. "Do you understand everything he says?" asked Pippin of the child.

"Of course," she replied loftily. "I take care of him. His name is Will Goldflake. He doesn't like to be called Bogle, so please remember."

"I will remember," said Pippin. "Did he tell you that his name was Will Goldflake?"

"Of course he did, or I couldn't have known. It was on a tobacco tin."

Pippin was left to make what he could of this information. "My father," said the child, "says that he has an immortal soul. You are glad of that, aren't you, Will Goldflake?"

The simpleton made reply in his own language, and the child said: "When my father talks to him he always gives him something to eat afterwards. He is generally hungry. He wants to know if he can come to our van this evening. Yes, Will Goldflake, you may come if you sit quiet and listen to father. Perhaps you will find salvation. Have you found salvation yet?" she asked, turning her large eyes on Pippin, who was so taken aback by this question that he could find no reply.

But she did not wait for one. "They call my father Chaplain Joey," she said. "He is a very good man. I know that, although he says he is the chief of sinners. He generally preaches on Sundays. You must come and hear him."

Pippin promised to do so, wondering what strange thing he should hear next of the people of the circus. They got their jug filled at the door of the farm-house

and the little girl paid for the milk with coppers, and asked if she could buy some eggs.

"Lor bless you!" said the farmer's wife, beaming at her, her arms akimbo. "Your people have cleared me out. Why didn't you come earlier, my dear? You're a pretty little thing now, and what might you do in the circus?"

"I ride on a pony," said the little girl. "But if you haven't any eggs could you direct me where to get them? Mother wants to make a pudding."

The farmer's wife laughed. "If that is all," she said. "I daresay I can oblige you, and perhaps two or three new-laid ones besides," and she went in and brought out a basketful.

The little girl thanked her gravely, paid what she was asked and handed the woman a printed tract. "My father says will you oblige him by reading that and thinking it over?" she said.

"Lor' bless my soul!" exclaimed the woman, taking the tract, which was entitled "Thou Shalt Do No Murder," and the little girl moved away, followed by Pippin and Will Goldflake, who carried the jug of milk carefully and gloated over it.

On the way back the little girl showed some mundane curiosity concerning Pippin's future. "Is it true that you are going to take Mr. Brown's place?" she asked him, and expressed herself pleased to hear that he was. "I like you," she said, looking straight at him out of her big serious eyes. "You have been kind to Will Goldflake. And he likes you too. He said so. But you mustn't let the gaudy trappings of the circus lead you astray. Father says that that is the danger of our life,

and that if he catches us at it—me and Sophie—he'll wallop us well. He thinks Mr. Brown has gone to heaven, but he's not sure. You would like father. Will you come and see him now? He would like to have a straight talk with you, I'm sure."

Pippin accepted this invitation, so far as to stand outside the clown's van while the little girl took the milk and the eggs from Will Goldflake and went inside.

The clown came out. He did not look in the least like a clown now. He was a solemn little man with a wrinkled face, and was dressed in an old suit of a nondescript colour, not very clean. He shook hands with Pippin and called him "brother," asking him if he was a Christian, to which Pippin replied that he hoped he was.

"Ah," said the clown, "you may well say that. It's a blessed thing to be certain of your calling and election. Let us walk up and down on the grass and talk together."

Pippin was a little nervous at this invitation, but Chaplain Joey seemed only to want a hearer, and began to talk at once.

"People will tell you," he said, "that it is impossible to lead the life I am doing and keep your religion. I hope I know better. I consider myself called to keep the light burning in this circus just as much as if I was to settle down and preach in a chapel. Thanks to me, sinner as I am, there is less to complain of in the way of loose behaviour in this company than in any on the road; and I know what I am talking about, for before I was converted I went with several, and was as bad as anybody—in fact worse, for I had had the benefit of a godly home, and they hadn't. Oh, I assure you I was a very great sinner. It was a great triumph when they

got hold of me. I dare say you have seen my name now, billed for meetings."

"No," said Pippin.

"Oh!" said the clown, evidently disappointed. "I am pretty well known. 'Joey, the Converted Clown.' Are you sure you've never heard of me?"

"Never," said Pippin.

"Well, perhaps you haven't been about the world much. I'm a great draw. I tell them all about my past life. You could hear a pin drop. There will be a meeting in the town where we stop next week. I will get you a ticket for the platform."

"No, thank you," said Pippin. "I don't want to hear about your past life. If it was as bad as you say, you might keep it to yourself for the sake of your children."

"Eh?" said the clown, greatly astonished.

"If you have so much to be ashamed of," said Pippin, "I should keep quiet about it if I were you."

"Ashamed of!" echoed the clown. "What do you mean? I've nothing to be ashamed of."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, then. I thought you said you had."

"I said I had been a very great sinner. That is quite a different thing. Young man, I am afraid I was mistaken in you. I thought you had found the truth."

"Well, I am afraid I was mistaken in you," retorted Pippin. "I don't understand the things you talk about so glibly. So I'll wish you good evening." He swung off indignantly. Like all honest youths he hated a humbug, and thought he had found one here. But no man is altogether a hypocrite, just as no man is altogether a saint. Maddock, of whom he made enquiries concerning Chap-

lain Joey as they supped together gave him a fair character.

"He's all right," he said, "and always was. Before he took to the preaching line I daresay he used to drink a pint of beer sometimes and now he drinks none. And he may have dropped a mild oath occasionally, same as the rest of us, without meaning much by it. 'Course, when you get on to a platform or into a pulpit you've got to turn that into hard drinking and hard swearing, or nobody'll think anything of you. He gets more excitement out of his preaching now than ever he did out of what he calls his life of sin, and he gets what most people want to keep them going, over and above their work; he gets consideration."

"Consideration!" repeated Pippin, not quite understanding.

"You won't meet many people," said Maddock, "who don't want to be a little different from everybody else—looked up to—thought something of. It's a natural weakness. I was thinking over it the other day when I was shaving. I suppose you might say it's the dignity of human nature asserting itself. You will hear people say what an unaccountable thing it is that poor people spend such a lot of money and make so much fuss over a funeral. I don't think it's an unaccountable thing at all. Death is always touching us, but we never get used to it. It's a very big thing. It does give dignity, and when it comes their way they make the most of it. A man will pride himself on being well, or on getting up early in the morning, or on having more hair than other people, or on having a great deal less. There's nothing he won't pride himself on, as long as it makes

him a little different from the rest. If Chaplain Joey were a first-class clown he might be content with that, for people love a good clown. But he isn't, so he's got to be something else besides, and as far as I'm concerned he's worth more to me as he is than if he showed up better in the ring. And I don't have to pay him so much."

Maddock laughed, as if to show that his cynicism was only half sincere.

"I thought he wasn't bad in the ring," said Pippin.

"No, he isn't bad. But there are thousands of people who aren't bad at anything. If they get a job they'll do it as well as the next man, but they don't do it so well that you've got to give it 'em. That's the difference between a first-class man and a second-class man, and I don't care whether he's a clown or a cabinet minister."

"He says that it is owing to him that this circus is so much better behaved than any other," said Pippin.

"Oh, does he? Well, he's welcome to the opinion. I've got an idea that I've something to do with it myself. But, I'll tell you what, the women have a great deal more to do with it than either of us. Mrs. Pringle—Chaplain Joey's wife, for instance—now, there's a good woman. Puts up with her husband's nonsense—well, I call it nonsense, though I wouldn't say a word against religion—and just goes her own way. Keeps her own children neat and clean and well-behaved, and gives an eye to the girls who are here on their own. So does Mrs. Polder—you know, the Polder Troupe of Acrobats. So did poor Mrs. Brown. Funny thing! Women cling to respectability, if you give 'em the chance; and I do give 'em a chance here. They are a lot better housed than any others of their kind I've ever come across, and it

would surprise you the number of applicants I have from other shows to join ours. I'm a respectable man myself, and I wouldn't allow the things that go on in some travelling shows. It pays too. Maddock's Circus has a good reputation all over the country. I get chaffed about it sometimes. Bamfield, where I served apprentice, and has the only other travelling circus that counts, puts it about that we always open with family prayer, on horseback. Well, I shouldn't want to make any difference in the entertainment if we did."

CHAPTER XVII

PIPPIN PLAYS HIS PART

The evening came on which Pippin made his first appearance in the ring. During the earlier part of the entertainment he was in the tent which was joined on to the larger one, and lent a hand with the horses as they passed in and out. One by one the performers arrived, dressed for their parts, their private characteristics a little obscured by their costumes, and thrown off altogether as they passed through the curtains and faced their audience.

They were performing in a big town. The tent was quite full, and the people who crowded it more than usually enthusiastic. Everything went to a roar of applause, and the performers came out after their turns flushed with success. Each thought of himself or herself, and was ready to go to any labour of invention or practice to rise in so agreeable a calling and earn still more of those intoxicating plaudits. Maddock knew well enough how to take advantage of this spirit of encouragement and emulation. He was unsparing of words of commendation and pattings on the back, and came hurriedly into the tent time after time, when he usually stayed in the ring between the turns, to show to one or another that he shared the enthusiasm of the audience. He would lead a performer into the ring to receive a renewed ovation, and to many of his troupe that evening did he confide his conviction that with such abilities and more diligent endeavour they would go far.

Signor Franginelli-Smithers, who always opened the performance, not entirely to his satisfaction, for people were not usually warmed up to appreciation until later, and the better seats not yet occupied, was warmly applauded this evening, and took to himself a large part of the credit for the good humour in which the audience remained for the rest of the evening. "Give 'em a good lead," he said to his friend Fraddle, when he was resting from his labours after a hearty recall, "and you'll keep 'em going until the end." He passed his fingers through his crimped and frizzled hair, and cast a glance of satisfaction around him, when his eyes met those of Pippin, who was standing by. "Unless the whole show is spoiled by the amateurs," he added with a scowl.

Pippin let this go by. Nervousness was already upon him, and he had no mind for a contest with Smithers at the moment.

Rosie Schwenk came into the tent equipped for her act. It was the first time Pippin had seen her so dressed since the first evening, and his heart gave a little jump. She looked every inch the lady of quality now, haughty and beautiful, and he could not keep his eyes off her, nor his admiration out of them. She met his look and turned away scornfully, and he experienced a sinking sensation. But he was a youth not temperamentally inclined to play the humble drooping lover, if he played the lover at all, and as her horse was led in, not in the quietest of moods, and she prepared to mount it, he went forward to give her a lift into the saddle.

So did Smithers, and it was Smithers whose assistance she accepted, while Pippin, who had been pushed aside not too gently, stood by and looked on, much annoyed. But

the horse fidgeted and sidled away, and Smithers was clumsy; and presently she said with an exclamation of impatience: "Oh, what's the good of you? Here, Glanville, let's see if you can do any better."

But Pippin stood still with his hands behind his back. "You chose Smithers," he said. "You had better stick to him."

Smithers cast upon him a look of concentrated rage. Rosie Schwenk eyed him in haughty but genuine surprise. She was not used to having her favours received in that way. But Fraddle stepped forward and made a stirrup of his hands. She mounted with a spring and was at home in the saddle at once. She gathered up her reins, and looked down upon Pippin with her eyes ablaze. "If I were Smithers I would give you a good hiding," she said.

"So you recommended before," replied Pippin, "and I say again, let Smithers try."

It looked for a moment as if Smithers would try. He clenched his fist, and his face beneath his absurd mop of hair was scarlet. But at that moment Maddock came bustling in calling for the Countess di Rimini, and when he had led her into the ring Joey, the clown, came forward and interfered authoritatively. He was dressed in a baggy suit of white calico adorned with large scarlet spots, he had a scarlet triangle painted over his right eye, and the rest of his face, except his lips and eyebrows, was whitened. "Oh, my young brothers," he said earnestly, holding out an admonishing hand, "do not give way to these angry passions. Make it up now. Be friends. Let us live in peace."

The contrast between his appearance and the pious bleat in which he spoke was almost too much for Pippin.

He turned away to prevent himself from laughing outright, and Smithers also moved away with whatever dignity nature had vouchsafed him.

The clown's little daughter came up to Pippin with her satellite, Bogle, and an older sister, and offered him some sweets out of a bag.

"Will Goldflake gave me these," she said. "He had some money and he wanted to spend all of it on sausages. But I told him he must not be greedy and had better spend half of it on sweets for me. He was quite agreeable. This is my sister Sophie. I have told her about you and she wishes to make your acquaintance."

Pippin shook hands with Sophie, who was about a year older than her sister. "How do you think we look?" she asked.

Both children were dressed as ladies of the French Court, as that dress is understood in circuses. With two other little girls, and four little boys attired as courtiers, they were about to go through a quadrille mounted on piebald ponies.

"I think you look charming," said Pippin; and indeed they were very pretty little girls and their quaint dresses suited them.

"Sophie!" said the younger sister reproachfully. "You must not ask questions like that. You must remember that the love of fine clothes is a snare of the evil one."

"Oh, bother!" said Sophie.

Pippin went to array himself in the clothes he was to wear as Dick Turpin. He whistled gaily as he did so in the privacy of his van. In spite of the scorn of Rosie Schwenck and the hostility of Smithers, the circus was a delightful playground, and he was lucky to find himself in

it. The clothes he was putting on well became him, and by and by he was going to do something gallant and picturesque on a fine horse before the eyes of a highly appreciative audience.

Presently his whistling died away. Nervousness came upon him again. Supposing he made a fool of himself! It was just as likely as not. He more than half repented of his audacity in taking upon himself a position for which nothing in his previous life had prepared him, and when he had finished his toilet and left his van for the circus tent he would have given something to be sitting quietly at home, or resting at an inn after a hard day's tramp.

When he arrived at the tent he found it crowded with the performers and the properties for the second part of the entertainment. The first part had just come to an end. The band in the ring was playing a raucous march, and the audience was singing and whistling to it in high good humour.

Maddock was here, there and everywhere giving directions. "Good gracious," he exclaimed when he saw Pippin. "The show begins in ten minutes and you are not made up. You can't go on like that; you look like a yellow ghost in this light. Here, somebody who is ready —Smithers—make Mr. Glanville up, there's a good fellow."

But Smithers said haughtily: "Me and Mr. Glanville are not on speaking terms, Mr. Maddock. When an individual—"

But Maddock interrupted him impatiently. "Oh, I haven't time to listen to your nonsense. You're the rottenest performer in the show and you give yourself most airs.

Here, Fraddle! Are you on speaking terms with Mr. Glanville by any chance?"

Fraddle, attired to represent an elderly tollgate-keeper, grinned all over his round good-natured face. "Come on," he said to Pippin. "I'll soon make you so handsome you won't know yourself."

He led him to a corner of the tent where there was a trestle table covered with a rather dirty white cloth, a looking-glass behind it, and an assortment of grease sticks and other articles of theatrical make-up.

"I should give him a red nose if I were you," was Smithers' parting shot, and Fraddle laughed as he settled his victim in a chair and tied a napkin round his neck.

"Don't you take any notice of Smithers," he said confidentially. "He's a bit sore at being passed over. But he'll soon come round, and we shall all be drinking and playing cards together before you know where you are."

"I don't know that I want to play cards or anything else with Smithers," said Pippin. "I don't like him."

"Ah, that's where you make a mistake," said Fraddle, taking off his powdered wig and setting vigorously to work on his forehead with a stick of grease paint. "You should try to like everybody. You'll get on much better."

Pippin being reduced to silence by the liberties that were being taken with his face, Fraddle proceeded to develop his proposition as he worked. "Take my case," he said. "I like everybody. Can't help it. Sometimes I try to dislike a fellow—at least I used to—just for a change, you know. But, bless you, it's no use. When I think I've worked myself up to give him a bat over the bonnet if he so much as looks my way, there's a something in him gets over me. Perhaps it's something he says, or the way

he says it, or a look in his eye, or the way he takes something, and I can no more help liking that fellow than I can—well, I'm like that. I'm all water. I thought I didn't like you much when Smithers came in and said you had pouched his job; but I feel now as if I could stand you drinks for the rest of my life, if I had the money. Whether it's your freckles, or the way your hair's cut, or the way your ears stick out, I don't know. But there it is."

During a free moment Pippin managed to murmur his acknowledgments of this gratifying state of feeling.

"It's a gift," continued Fraddle, setting to work again. "After all, it's a gift. Look at my history! Son of a bricklayer—that's what I am, and never tried to hide it. And here I am—a gentleman, or as good as, if you don't look too close. Why? Because I always liked everybody from the beginning of the chapter. I'm no good, you know. Never no good at anything; I won't deceive you. At school, bottom of the class. Always. *Couldn't* learn. But liked? Oh, bless you, yes—much more than the sharper ones. Why? Because I liked *him*—the master, you know. Couldn't help it, though the rest of 'em said he was a beast. So he was; but there was a *something* about him. Taken away from school at thirteen and sent to work in a baker's shop. Bread? Lor! the pigs wouldn't eat it. But when I was sacked he said he'd have adopted me if he hadn't had eleven children of his own—the baker, I mean. I loved that man, and showed it. Couldn't help it. And he swore at me proper too. Page boy to an old lady after that. Temper! Well, I was only there a month, but I'd been there longer than any of 'em when she sacked me. She had to, or she wouldn't have

had a plate left to eat off. I was one of the smashers, you know; no good at domestic service. But she said she was sorry to lose me all the same. Then I took on here. Saw Maddock poaching birds' eggs and helped him for a whole day. Adored the man before the end of it, and he couldn't get rid of me. Been here ever since. Well, there you are, young Turpin. I must say you do look a tip-topper. Handsomer than poor Brown by a long chalk, and *there* was a nice fellow if you like."

With powdered wig, blackened eyebrows, and brown and red paint hiding his freckles, Pippin's appearance was completely altered, and he stood up in his green riding-dress, with the ruffles at his neck and wrists, as handsome a young man as ever rode the ring. He looked at himself in the glass and was absurdly pleased, and walked out to fetch Black Bess with a healthy swagger.

As he led the mare into the tent the women and girls of the circus looked at him with admiration, all except Rosie Schwenck, who turned away her head. Maddock, in his Sheriff's costume, looked him up and down. "You'll do very well," he said.

Then the play began. Pippin mounted the mare and waited for his cue, his heart in his high boots. The mare grew restless, curveting all about the tent, and as he was trying to calm her his call came. He galloped into the ring, his blood warmed. It was a blaze of hot light, with hundreds of faces tier on tier all around it; and then a storm of shouting and cheering and clapping broke out and continued for a long time. Pippin had no reason to complain of his first reception.

He went through his part, the spoken word as well as the action, far better than he could have anticipated, and

was constantly applauded. The applause indeed went a little to his head, and it was like wine to him to catch a gleam of admiration in the eyes of Rosie Schwenck, whom as a lady of fashion travelling by coach he treated with ornate forbearance, while yet his avocation impelled him to rob her of all the valuables she carried. But he returned them to her, and handed her back into the coach with an elaborate flourish, which in his exaltation of spirit was a trifle over-acted, and caused her lip to curl. And unfortunately his spur caught in her velvet train, which gave her the opportunity of fixing him with a low-spoken opprobrious epithet during the progress of disentanglement. To the eyes of the onlookers, all was courtesy and high-breeding on both sides, but if their ears had heard the exquisite lady of quality mutter, "Clumsy lout!" to the gallant highwayman, they might have wondered that he did not then and there relieve her of the trinkets which he had so generously restored to her.

When Pippin and his horse, and the coach with its load of despoiled passengers, were outside the ring and the tent, he went up to Rosie Schwenck and looking her square in the face said: "I am very sorry for that accident, and will be more careful another time." His impulse to show resentment of her rudeness had passed, and as he was ready to ignore it she could not very well do otherwise; for that would have been to allow in him a courtesy which was not in her, and to disclaim the gentility which she aped before the public, some proportion of which she also affected in private life.

She turned from him, as it seemed, in some confusion, but without saying anything. Smithers, however, who was burning with resentment at having to take the craven

part of the lady's husband, and cry on his knees for mercy from the highwayman, instead of ruffling it as the highwayman himself, said with much truculence that he supposed Pippin thought himself a mighty fine fellow, adding that he himself thought the contrary, and that he had reason to know that Miss Schwenck was of his opinion. "When an individual pushes himself in where he isn't wanted," said Smithers in high scorn and with intense meaning, "he had better look out for himself, or he'll find himself in trouble."

Smithers turned his back and went off to array himself for the sheriff's dinner party, and Pippin understood, what he had already suspected, that Smithers was in much the same state as himself in his feelings towards Rosie Schwenk, and perhaps with more to go upon in the way of memories, since he had known her for a long time and Pippin knew her scarcely at all.

Well, if it were only to get the better of a rival, there was little to daunt him, but something rather to spur him on. But he did not feel quite comfortable about Smithers. With the quick generosity of his youth he was ready to admit to the full that the acute annoyance shown by the young man was justified. He had come in to dispossess him just as he was on the brink of glory, and if Smithers counted upon the high part he was to have played to advance him with Rosie Schwenk, then his irritation must have been greater even than his expression of it.

Pippin took supper that evening with Maddock, who congratulated him upon his performance, and told him that he considered himself fortunate in having him to fill Brown's place. "I don't look to you," he said, "to stay with me for ever, for although I suppose you come from

much the same sort of home as poor Brown, there is not the same reason with you as with him for keeping away from it, and you will want to be going back some day. But if you will stay for the summer, and give me time to look about for a horseman as good as you or Brown, it will be to my advantage and I will make it to yours. Now that I have seen you in the ring I am ready to pay you the same as I paid Brown, but I suppose that the payment will be less to you than the opportunity for a pleasant sort of roving life; and that you will have for as long as you like to stay with me."

This was handsomely said, and Pippin thanked him, but said that he had understood that Smithers was to have taken Brown's place if it had not been given to him, and expressed something of his regret at having ousted him.

"You needn't worry yourself about that," said Maddock unconcernedly. "Smithers understudied Brown, as he will understudy you, but I have never told him that he was to play Turpin permanently. Smithers thinks himself a horseman, but he is only a circus-rider, which is a very different thing, and he is not even a very good circus-rider. Smithers may think himself lucky in being kept on in my circus at all, and getting the pay he does. If you have any nonsense from Smithers, tell me, and I will put him in his place."

Pippin was not quite satisfied with this. "I can fight my own battles," he said; "but haven't you allowed Smithers to think that he was to step into Brown's place?"

"Perhaps I have," said Maddock, as unconcernedly as before. "There is no sense in upsetting people if you want to make use of them. If you hadn't come on the scene just at the right moment, Smithers would have

played the part of Turpin until I could have got somebody more suitable; and I should have lost no time in doing so. Smithers has nothing to grumble at whatever."

Pippin went to sleep that night with his head buzzing, and not with the wine he had been given at supper, of which Maddock had drunk the larger share. The lights were in his eyes again, the hot scents of the tent and the sawdust in his nostrils, and the roar of applause in his ears. He saw himself sitting on his fine horse, taking his great leaps, making his gallant speeches. He saw the kind eyes of the woman fixed on him, the center of all admiration. All night long in his dreams he went over his performance, and awoke in the morning looking forward to its repetition with the keenest pleasure.

Well, it was worth while to have left his home for this.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PEOPLE OF THE CIRCUS

In his pleasure at having made such a success of his part, Pippin was all the more inclined to forgive Smithers for the ill-feeling he nourished towards him. He was rather an absurd creature, and it would be easy enough to get the better of him. But to get the better of him was not likely to bring much satisfaction with it; it would be better to win him over, and do him a good turn. This was within Pippin's power. At this early stage he was much under the glamour of his occupation; but he did not propose to keep at it forever, and when the time came for him to leave it would heal all soreness if Smithers took his place.

He sought out the good-natured Fraddle. "I think it is rather hard on Smithers that I have been taken on as Dick Turpin instead of him," he said. "It is natural that he should be annoyed with me; but I wish him no harm, and would rather be friends with him than enemies."

Fraddle beamed all over. "That's what I like to hear," he said. "You're a man after my own heart; I knew it as soon as I set eyes on you. Smithers won't hold out against you. Now I'll tell you what we will do. We'll go down to the 'Fiddle and Pipe' and have a glass together. When we come out of it we shall be like three brothers."

"Very well," said Pippin. "But you must let me pay for the entertainment. Go and find Smithers and tell him

I want to be friends with him. There's no need to make a scene about it. We'll just go and sit together for a bit, and forget all about what has happened."

But simply to ignore what had passed did not comply with Smithers' histrionic inclinations. He came forward with the smiling Fraddle, wearing an air of high dignity and solemnity, and took off his cap to Pippin. "My friend here informs me," he said, "that certain things that have passed between us are—are—that you wish they hadn't passed. When an individual takes that line with Alfred Smithers, Alfred Smithers would not be the man he is if—if—"

"Oh, come along," said Pippin. "We're going to have a drink and a talk together. I have something to propose to you."

Fraddle took his arm and led him off. He was inclined to offence at having had his speech cut short, but his offence was mixed with relief at not having to carry it on on a note as high as his desire, and when he found himself seated in the cosy parlour of the inn with a tankard in front of him he allowed himself to relax into amiability. Pippin was obviously of a higher social grade than himself or Fraddle, and his move towards friendship flattered Smithers, always doubtful about himself in spite of his vanity, and setting great store by any degree of gentility.

"I've told Fraddle," said Pippin, "that I see now it was hard on you not to be allowed to take Brown's place. I ought to have known, when Maddock offered it to me, that there must have been somebody else disappointed of it. But I didn't think of that. However, I have thought of it now, and what I want to tell you is that I shan't be going with this circus for more than a few months at the

outside, and I'll do all I can to get Maddock to give you the part of Dick Turpin when I leave."

"Now I call that very handsome," said Fraddle. "What did I tell you, Smithers? This is a lad you may well rely on."

"Well, I don't deny that it's kindly thought of," said Smithers. "But when Glanville leaves us I shall take the part anyhow. Maddock wouldn't dare pass me over a second time. Maddock is an individual who wants watching, but he knows he can't go too far. Alfred Smithers can put up with a good deal, and Maddock knows it and takes advantage of it. But he also knows that if he tries it on beyond reason he'll have Alfred Smithers to deal with."

He looked very fierce and proud, and Fraddle said: "Yes, no doubt it's true that the part will be yours when Granville leaves. Still I maintain that it's like the man he is to think about it."

Pippin saw that he must tell them everything. "I shouldn't have made the offer I have," he said, "if you were going to step into the part with no trouble taken about it. But Maddock has no intention of giving it to you permanently, and never had." Then he told them what Maddock had said on the subject.

Smithers expressed his sense of outrage in no measured terms, and made threats against Maddock which he might have carried out if he had been an unlimited monarch and Maddock one of his minions, but hardly under existing circumstances. Then he suddenly passed into a plaintive state, and asked what reason Maddock had given for treating him in that way.

"Well, he says you can't ride well enough," said Pippin.

Smithers' indignation renewed itself at this statement, and Fraddle murmured that that really was going a little *too* far.

"You heard how I was clapped and cheered only last night," said Smithers. "I don't believe there's a man in the country can turn somersaults off a platform on a moving horse better than I can, and I'll say that to Maddock's face and dare him to contradict me."

"Perhaps he wouldn't," said Pippin. "Maddock says you're a good circus-rider, but you're no horseman."

Smithers descended into the depths again. "It's true," he said, in a tone of resignation. "But I didn't know Maddock had noticed it. I can stand on a horse going round in a ring, if he doesn't go too fast, and nobody can say I'm not graceful when I do it. But when I'm sitting in a saddle it's a different thing. There's no grace about me. Oh, I know it well, and if Maddock knows it then I may as well give him notice before he gives it me."

"I don't think so," said Pippin. "You have played the part on occasions, and you have done what was wanted. Black Bess is a beauty to jump, but it takes some pluck to go over some of those fences, and you have done that and are ready to do it again."

"Oh, nobody can say I haven't got the pluck," said Smithers, picking up again. "Even Maddock wouldn't say that. I should like to hear him if he did. He wouldn't say it twice to *my* face."

"Very well, then," said Pippin. "All you want is a little horsemanship, and that's easily learned if you like horses and put your mind into it. Now I was brought up among horses. I believe I rode before I could walk, and I've been riding all sorts ever since. I can give you

a hint or two, and shall be glad to do it. It was what was in my mind when I made the offer. Let's go out together, and I'll teach you what I can. When the time comes you'll surprise Maddock by what you can do. It's not much that's wanted. You're a far better actor than I am, and you'll look the part all right."

Smithers gracefully disclaimed superiority in acting, but it was evident that he thought Pippin's tribute deserved. "I can't help throwing myself into a part," he said. "When I get before an audience it's like as if I was outside myself. I suppose it's what they call genius."

"That's what it is," said Fraddle encouragingly. "I haven't got it myself, but I know it when I see it. Well, it's a great thing that you two are friends now. That's what makes me happy, to see everybody friends together. Here's a health to both of you. I've known you, Smithers, for some years, and a better fellow never stepped, and I may say the same of Glanville, though I've only known him a few days."

Pippin and Smithers went out riding together early in the mornings, unknown to Maddock, who would have objected to having his horses taken out in that way. Smithers sat in his saddle like a sack, and by the side of Pippin, who was all ease and alertness, looked like a tripper on a hired nag. But his adaptability enabled him to take advantage of the instruction offered him. He had no hands for a horse, and his seat was never the same two minutes running; but somehow he managed to imitate good horsemanship for the short bursts of action which were all that was necessary in the ring. It was true that he was an actor born, though his light composition made his art a small thing. Pippin was surprised to find out what he

could do, after learning by experience what he couldn't be taught to do. After a week or two he made an excuse of some light ailment, which he exaggerated on purpose, to give Smithers the opportunity of playing his part. Maddock grumbled hugely, and for the first time showed Pippin the disagreeable side of him. But after the performance it was as if he had no such side. He said that Smithers had done better than he had expected, and that when the time came he should probably give him the part, and look out for another man to deal with his horses for him.

When Smithers was told this he assumed at once an air of high self-confidence, and said that it was well for Maddock that he had come to his senses, hinting that he would greatly have rued it if he had not.

Pippin smiled at him. "I suppose I have had nothing to do with it," he said.

Smithers, still in the exaltation of success, looked surprise at him, and then descended from his pedestal. Tears of emotion came into his eyes, he grasped Pippin's hand, and said fervently: "You are the best friend I ever had."

The story of what Pippin had done for Smithers got about among the people of the circus, and he was given much credit for it. They all liked him, except Schwenck, the lion-tamer, and apparently his daughter, Rosie, neither of whom would have anything to do with him, and possibly Joey, the clown, who may have suspected him of making light of his religious pretensions. He had a pleasant friendly way with everybody, and, being less occupied than most, often lent a hand of help to others.

This was a little world of its own in which he made himself at home, and one in which there was as much

variety of character and temperament as in any other. Vanity and jealousy were rife in it, but there were many who were free from either fault, and there was much kindness among these people of show and tinsel. Maddock's boast of a good moral tone among his people had something to justify it, but its centre was not in him, though he encouraged it and made some capital out of it. Neither was it in Joey the Converted Clown. Chaplain Joey, he liked to hear himself called, and would have it that he was doing a great work among the people of the circus. But he was treated with indulgence as an eccentric rather than looked up to, and had scarcely any followers outside his own family. There was as much self-approbation in his preachings as in the posturings of Smithers under his style of the Signor Franginelli. He showed an ugly spiteful temper if anything happened to cross him, and it had been noticed that this weakness was not one of those which he so fervently confessed in public.

It was his cheerful little wife, who looked up to him as a good and wise man, and suffered his disagreeable way without complaining, to whom the well-being of his state was due. She took no part in the play of the circus, except to appear now and then as a super, but was as busy with her children and her domestic duties as if she lived in a house anchored to the ground instead of one drawn on wheels. Her caravan was a model of shining neatness, and her children not less so. When she had finished her work inside she would sit on the steps or in a chair on the grass busy with her needle, and Pippin would sometimes sit and talk to her, or play with the children, who all loved him.

Perhaps his chief friend in the circus was the little girl who had made herself champion of the poor creature they called Bogle. She was always lying in wait for him, and was never happier than when she was in his company, chattering away to him upon every subject that came into her head. It was a beautiful little character that she revealed. She would have mothered all the world. The greatest treat he could give her was to ask her to do something for him. He was her hero. She would sew on a button for him as if it were a religious ceremony, but she would also direct him in the way he should go, and rebuke him if she did not approve of anything that he did or said.

One morning she came to him and said: "Will Goldflake ought to have a new suit of clothes. He isn't fit to be seen. But he hasn't got any money to buy them. I'm always telling him that he ought to save some up, but he spends it all on food. He doesn't really understand about saving money, and he's always hungry; so I can't be very angry with him."

The last sentence was spoken in a confidential whisper, for Bogle was grinning and muttering at her side, and it was a principle with her not to admit before him that he was deficient in understanding.

"Well, he certainly does look as if he wants a new rig-out," said Pippin. "What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to take up a collection," she said. "Would you like to put something in?"

She was carrying a plate, which she held out to him, and he made his contribution, at which she was very pleased.

"That will make a lovely start," she said. "Father often puts half-a-crown into the plate to start a collection, because it makes other people give more. But I know you won't want to take yours back. Would you like to come round with us?"

Pippin said that he would, and they took the vans and tents in order. It was in the quiet time after the mid-day meal, and most of their occupants were in or about them.

The old wardrobe woman was the first to whom application was made. She was already busy with her needle, while her granddaughter the Fairy Rosebud, was tidying up, but smiled when she saw Pippin approaching and left off to hear what they had come for.

"Lor', dearie!" said the old woman. "I might spare a copper or two, but you want more than coppers to buy a suit of clothes."

"If you give according to your ability it will find acceptation," said the child solemnly, and the Fairy Rosebud laughed. "Isn't she a funny little thing?" she said aside to Pippin. "She's always talking like old Joey when he's in the pulpit. Why don't you ask Mr. Maddock or Mr. Schwenck, Lizzie? They ought to find Bogle in clothes."

"Will Goldflake and I would rather go to our friends," said Lizzie. "Will you be a cheerful giver?"

She held out the plate, and Pippin laughed and said: "There! you'll have to subscribe now." So the Fairy Rosebud found some coppers and her grandmother a sixpence, and they went their way.

Smithers and Fraddle and half a dozen other young men with whom they messed were smoking outside their

tent, and made their customary jokes at the appearance of the child and her protégé, which she received without smiling. "You can all look after yourselves," she said, "and you have plenty of money to spend upon smoking and drinking and playing cards and other wickedness. But Will Goldflake can't look after himself as well as you can, because he has a slight impediment in his speech. So you ought to be kind to him and help him."

"Hark at that now!" said the tender-hearted Fraddle. "Give me a kiss, Lizzie, and I'll give you a whole shilling."

"I don't like kissing people who smell of beer," said the child, but she held up her little face and Fraddle kissed her and rang his shilling in the plate. Smithers followed with two, for he liked to play the grand, as his companions expressed it. One of the other young men confessed himself broke, but another said that it was he who had won money from him at cards and would pay for both.

"But Lizzie don't approve of playing cards," said Fraddle.

"Father says they are the devil's picture book," she said. "But if you are wicked enough to play for money it is better that you should give it away in kindness than spend it on iniquity."

"Preach us a sermon like your Dad, Lizzie," said one, "and we'll make it up to more."

But she wouldn't do that. "You are scoffers at holy things," she said. "But perhaps you will be forgiven, as you haven't turned away from the poor and needy. Come along, Will Goldflake. You are *not* to drink their beer. It is very wicked of them to tempt you."

Poor Bogle followed her, protesting in his indistin-

guishable speech. "I know he drinks beer when I'm not there to look after him," she confided to Pippin. "But in time I shall wean him of it. He wouldn't do it at all if they didn't offer it to him, and once they tried to make him drunk. It's a dreadful thing to think that they are all going to hell."

"It is a dreadful thing to say a thing like that," said Pippin, indignant not with her but with the teaching that could put such words into the mouth of a child.

"But it is true," she said seriously, "unless they find salvation; but nearly all of them refuse to embrace their opportunities."

"Do you think I am going to hell?"

She did not hesitate, and gave the same reply, but added: "You have been very kind to me and Will Goldflake, and I love you very much and pray for you every night and morning."

"That is better than talking about people going to hell," said Pippin. "You wouldn't hurt anybody you loved, would you?"

"No, of course not," she said.

"Very well then. You believe that God loves us, and yet you think he is going to hurt a great many people for ever and ever. It isn't true, you know, whoever told you so."

But she wouldn't have it, and Pippin did not want to draw upon himself the displeasure of her father for unsettling her in the doctrines in which she had been brought up. He saw that they were mere words to her, and that the sweetness and goodness of her nature were the best antidotes to such beliefs. "If you go on being kind and good," he said, "you can believe what you like."

But she wouldn't have that either, so he left the subject.

The Polder Troupe of Acrobats was practising in the ring, where some others of the circus people were also employed getting ready for the evening's entertainment.

It was the Polder family to whom Maddock's circus chiefly owed its exceptional reputation. Polder and his wife had both been born to the kind of life they led, and wanted no other either for themselves or their children. They were none of them without the love of public display, but their performance depended upon bodies wrought and kept up to a high pitch of perfection, and their minds were directed towards that end. The acrobat followed a more rigid rule of life than the clown, whose pretensions he treated with contempt. He was an ascetic, neither smoked nor drank, ate sparingly, kept to hours of the most regular, and practised his muscles continually. His two sons followed him in all these things and were proud of doing so. They exercised self-discipline for the sake of growing like him, whom they loved and admired, and the outlook into the future of either of them was to become the leader of a troupe of acrobats, as he was. But the bodily training to which their youth had been subjected bore that and still finer fruit; for after many years came the great war. By that time they were both past the age of service, but volunteered and were accepted because of their virility, fought on the side of right, and died.

Now young men will treat with respect above all others those who are skilled in the use of their bodies. Their assumptions of superiority are accepted where the assumptions of others are scorned. Polder and his sons

thought highly of themselves, and the young men of the circus looked up to them. They set a tone of abstinence which if it was not implicitly followed was respected. To follow the devious ways of self-indulgent youth, with plenty of opportunity for mischief, and no principle behind but enjoyment of the present, was, in Maddock's circus, to earn the contempt of those whose opinions were of value. Polder was a man of few words, but his approval or disapproval found its expression. He approved of Pippin for his clean limbs and his clean life, and welcomed his company, though it must be confessed that he gave little in return for it. For he knew little of life, and his obsession of bodily perfection mastered him.

The Polders were just finishing their practice as the child entered the great tent with her following. Polder's ideas worked slowly, and he wanted full explanation of Lizzie's scheme before he could make up his mind what to do about it. He eyed the prospective recipient of charity with no great favour, for he was loose and shambling, and Polder could have forgiven him his lack of brains but could not forgive him that. "Why doesn't he exercise himself with dumb-bells?" he asked. "That would make more of a man of him, and he wouldn't have to go round begging."

But Mrs. Polder had had a word with Pippin, whom she much liked. "Oh, Lizzie is collecting for a present for him, father," she said. "That's a good girl, dear! Yes, we'll all give you something, and if you give up the names put it down to the Troupe. You won't want to be behindhand with the rest, father, and perhaps it will shame Maddock into doing something more than he does for the poor afflicted creature."

From these mixed motives a substantial addition to Lizzie's collection presently accrued. Money was also collected from the men at work in the tent, who treated the matter with rough jocularity, but were kind to the child.

When they had left the tent, she said: "Now, Will Goldflake, I shan't want you any more for the present;" and when he had shambled off she said to Pippin: "I am going to Mr. Schwenck's van, and Will Goldflake doesn't like Mr. Schwenck."

"But I thought you weren't going to apply to him or Mr. Maddock," said Pippin.

"I shan't ask Mr. Schwenck," she said, "because he was very unkind to Will Goldflake, and he can't abide him. But I shall ask Rosie."

Pippin was not unmoved at the prospect of this interview. Rosie Schwenck had never ceased to treat him as if he were an offence upon the face of the earth, and Schwenck's van was the only one of them all that he had never entered. But her scorn of him had only added fuel to the flame she had lit in him. He was very deeply in love with her. He had managed to conceal his wounds, but they were heavy upon him, and beginning to spoil the life he would otherwise have enjoyed. The image of Rosie Schwenck was seldom out of his head now.

Herr Schwenck could be heard snoring inside his van. Rosie was washing plates outside. She dressed more carefully than most women of the circus, who affected curl-papers and wore somewhat slatternly clothes when not resplendently attired for the ring, or for their outings. Herr Schwenck claimed superiority of birth and education over the rest, and his daughter, though she

made no such claims and was friendly wherever it suited her to be so, gave some countenance to them. Pippin's heart contracted as he saw her neat and trim, with her sleeves rolled up over her dimpled elbows, engaged on her domestic task. But he put on an air of more than usual unconcern as they approached. It was a constant duel between these two, and if he was always looking for signs of relentment in her, which he would eagerly have met, he would not appear to be pleading for them.

Rosie looked up at them, and went on with her washing of dishes. There was a gleam in her eye and a slightly heightened colour in her fresh cheek. The child made her request, and held out her plate, upon which was now a pile of silver and copper coins, and one gold one, jointly subscribed by the Polder family.

"I should have thought Captain Glanville might have given Bogle one of his spare suits," said Rosie, not looking at Pippin. She always called him "Captain Glanville," with an inflexion of contempt on the "Captain," whenever she had occasion to refer to him in his hearing.

He was inured to this. "Captain Glanville," he said, imitating the inflexion, "hasn't any spare suits."

"Oh, indeed!" she said. "For a country gentleman of property that seems rather odd. But I should have thought you might have asked your friend Maddock, instead of begging of people so much below your quality. Maddock would do anything for you, wouldn't he?"

The child intervened. "We are not going to ask Mr. Maddock or Mr. Schwenck," she said. "It is going to be a present from Will Goldflake's friends. You have always been kind to Will Goldflake, Rosie, so I thought you wouldn't like to be left out."

"No more I shouldn't, dear," said Rosie, and went into the caravan.

"I knew she would. She is really very kind," said the child.

This tribute moved Pippin, who was quite ready to attribute kindness to her, and hoped that some day she would show some of it to him.

She came out and added to the pile of coins five shillings, which the child received with ardent expressions of gratitude. "You were quite right in what you said, Lizzie," said Pippin.

"What was that?" asked Rosie, and when she had been told tossed her head and said to Pippin: "I am what I was before you came here, and shall be the same when you have gone." So Pippin gained little advantage from his tentative approach; but the thought of her kindness remained with him, and made him long for her the more.

Joey, the clown, was sitting outside his van when they returned to it, reading in his Bible, which he liked to do so that he could be seen of men. His face darkened when he had enquired of the child's errand. He did not like her attachment to the simpleton, and she had collected more money than he was ever able to do from the people of the circus.

"Never do a thing like that again without asking me first," he said severely. "It isn't right to take collections for anything but the service of the tabernacle. Take it in, and I will see what is to be done with it."

"It is already settled what is to be done with it," said Pippin going off; and the clown looked after him with no pleasant expression.

CHAPTER XIX

PIPPIN LEAVES THE CIRCUS

Herr Schwenck, the lion-tamer, had been turned from the utmost of his rancour against Pippin, but had never forgiven him his offence, for he addressed no word to him, and scowled whenever chance brought him in his way. This attitude would not have caused Pippin any inconvenience, if it had been a question of Schwenck alone, for he kept himself aloof from the rest of the company, few of whom had any sort of liking for him. But it was also the attitude of his daughter, and that was a very different affair.

Rosie Schwenck was liked well enough, though the younger women were jealous of her good looks, and were severe upon the way she had the men running after her. She would give each and all of her admirers encouragement from time to time, but if they sought to draw profit from it would turn her back upon them. Only to Pippin, out of all of them, she seemed to give no encouragement, and would never hear his name mentioned without expressing her scorn for him. He was a country bumpkin, in spite of his high opinion of himself; a beggar on horseback; a flatterer of Maddock for his own advantage. For her part she could not tell what the other young men of the circus saw in him to make them put up with his airs. There was not one of them who was not more of a man than he.

The young men of the circus were not unmoved by the

severity of her strictures, and set up no opposition to them when in her company; but the women laughed at her and said that she would not speak in that way if her opinion of Pippin were not the opposite to what she proclaimed. At this she tossed her head, and asked whether she was ever to be seen talking to him. But after that she did not criticize him again before the women.

As for Pippin he was as deep in love with her as a generous-minded young man can be under the influence of his first passion, to which he gives himself over with no thought of what lies in front or on either side of it, living in a world of strong emotion which colours the smallest happening of his days. Whether he would have been so soon and so entirely subjugated if she had shown herself to him from the first for what she actually was —a young woman of very ordinary mind with a very pretty face—may be doubted. She would have nothing to do with him at all, so he endued her in the fervency of his mind with perfections far beyond her compass, and yearned for a word or a look of kindness from her with almost intolerable longing. She gave him that much from time to time, but no more, and it was enough to keep him at her feet, though he affected to treat her misliking of him with indifference, and was so far successful in his pretending that no one suspected his real feelings.

He was too unskilled to draw encouragement from the scorn with which she treated him. He had offended her father and did not see that that was no reason for it. What he hoped was that he would presently wear down that offence, and the occasional signs from her that he

might be doing so were all that he needed to keep his passion ablaze. Yet he sometimes raged against her, and told himself that he would break away altogether, from the circus and from her.

There came a time when her apparent dislike for him seemed to be melting. She addressed him when she was obliged to do so with ordinary courtesy, and once or twice she laughed with him in conversation with others, looking into his face as if there was community of spirit between them. How kind and sweet she was, under all the perversity of her behaviour! These were the true flowers of her nature, now at last unfolding to him. He adored her more than ever, and one night upon handing her back into the coach, as Dick Turpin, he ventured on a pressure of the hand. It was returned, ever so slightly, and he was in a heaven of bliss. The next morning he lay in wait for her, and when she appeared boldly proposed that she should walk with him to the town upon the outskirts of which the circus was encamped.

She stared at him with haughty amazement, and then broke out angrily against him. "Why will you always be annoying me with your attentions when it is plain that I don't want them?" she cried. "I have had enough of it, and if you don't leave me alone I shall complain to Mr. Maddock."

Her eyes flashed, and she stamped her foot, before turning her back upon him abruptly and walking off. There could be no doubt of her genuine anger, which wiped out completely all the signs of favour upon which he had fed himself during the days that had passed. It made an offence of the pressure of the hand which had so moved him the night before. His anger rose in turn.

This was the end, then. For the sake of his manhood he would no longer follow after a woman who treated him in that fashion.

This decision was made in the heat of the moment. He was very determined upon it, but some inner voice warned him that the carrying out of it would only be possible if he cut himself loose from the circus.

For this he was now quite ready. The glamour of his nightly appearances had departed sooner than he would have thought possible. He was not of the stuff of which performers are made. Smithers would have been a lost man without his nightly due of applause, and into every part that he played, though it were not a part that could gain him admiration and he was a player of no genius, he put his meagre soul, and wrapped himself round as with a cloak of romance. Pippin was tired of the work he was doing. He was earning money by it, but it was not the good work having to do with the land and its produce to which his life had hitherto tended and to which he would presently return. There was no satisfaction in it as work, and little any longer as pleasure. And he was with the same people day after day. Though they moved on from town to town, their lives were as settled as if they stayed always in the same place. Even the life of the road lacked adventure, with the long trailing caravan moving along it at a snail's pace, and all the peace of the country spoilt by it. He had not left his home for this. If it had not been for Rosie Schwenck he might have tired of it sooner. Now that he had made up his mind to have done with her he found that he was very tired of it. He would strike away as soon as he could settle affairs with Maddock.

He was also rather tired of Maddock, and his hobby, which was creditable to him as a man who might have devoted his leisure and his opportunities to pursuits less innocent than the collection of birds' eggs and birds' nests, but for Pippin meant only a return to the play of his youth. For he had no more than the born countryman's knowledge of the demonstrations of nature with which he had always been familiar, or pleasure in them, while to Maddock they brought something of a scientific interest. With a chosen companion their roamings afield would have served as well as any other occasion for a day of pleasure; but there was no essential community between the young man, driven by the spirit of his youth, and the much older man, who had got rid of all but secondary desires because he did not wish his life to be disturbed out of its contented ruck.

When he had made this decision his spirit suddenly lightened, but immediately drooped again as he imagined himself removed from Rosie Schwenck, whom it was unlikely that he would ever meet again.

He was walking in a wood near where the circus was encamped. It was Sunday afternoon. Maddock had invited him to an expedition with him, but he had refused, hoping when he did so for companionship which would please him better than Maddock's. He was very unhappy, and sat down on a fallen tree trunk to condole with himself.

The spring had marched on apace since Pippin had left home. Nature had laid a brighter carpet in the woods, having discarded her earlier primrose drugget. The wild hyacinths were as blue as the ceiling of the sky; wood anemones danced in delicate arabesque; the

rose campion blushed and glowed in shady corners. And from every brake and thicket came the music of the happy birds. Pippin heard them without hearing them, and the fresh beauty of nature all around him had no power to arouse him from the dejection that sat heavily upon him.

He was sitting by a grassy path on the edge of the wood. The path by which he had come there was hidden by a thick growth of yew, and he was startled by the sound of a twig broken upon it, for he had thought himself quite alone, and was not sure that he had not groaned the moment before, in the hearing of whoever might be coming.

It was Rosie Schwenck who came upon him as he started to his feet, and they stood in the path confronting each other, she apparently as surprised at the meeting as he was, though she might well have seen him starting on his lonely walk, and it was not her custom to take her own walks in loneliness. But if she had followed him he had no idea of it, and she could hardly have expected to come upon him with that suddenness.

His mind was full of resentful thoughts of her, and they found immediate vent as she stood there before him. "Oh, it's you!" he said, with no great courtesy. "Let me tell you, now this opportunity has come, that you will not be worried with my attentions much longer. I am leaving the circus as soon as I can, and until I do I shall be in your way as little as possible."

He doffed his hat to her, and made a stride past her on the path by which she had come.

She had by this time recovered herself. She did not move from where she stood, but said quietly: "That's a pity."

This brought him to a stop, and he turned towards her again. She stood half turned from him, her eyes lowered, and a faint smile at the corners of her mouth, while he uttered some of the bitterness that was in him.

"Yes, you say that!" he cried vehemently. "You would like me to think that we might be friends, which is all that I have ever wished for." (Oh, Pippin!) "And when you have fooled me enough you will turn on me once more, as you did this morning. But, no! I won't be treated in that way any longer, by you or anybody. It's over now. I shall go away, remembering all the insults that you have piled on me, and you can play your games with some other fool, if you can find as big a one as I have been."

She raised her eyes to him, still smiling a very little. "If you are going away," she said, "it would be better to part friends than enemies."

She was a girl of the circus, with small knowledge of the world outside it; but she looked something very different as she stood there, in her young beauty; and her quietness in face of his vehemence seemed to put her far above him, though, if he had remembered it, it was he who had hitherto used restraint in face of provocation.

His anger was dissolved under her words, but his soreness remained. "There has been no friendship between us," he said. "I have wanted it and you haven't. Why have you treated me as you have? Am I so much below all the rest of the men about you that you can make yourself a companion to them, while if I say as much as a word to you it is a deep offence? Oh, you have treated me shamefully, and for no reason, and you can't

wipe it out by a word at the end, which to-morrow very likely you will pretend has never been said."

The smile had faded from her face, which was still bent downwards. "I am not very happy," she said when he had finished speaking.

It was no answer to anything he had said, but it melted him completely towards her. Of so brittle a stuff is the anger of a lover, that a word or a tone will bring it to an end. He had nothing to say for the moment, but stood staring at her. A tear escaped from her and ran down her cheek, at which he was so immensely moved that he forgot all that had gone before and stammered out his wish to protect her from all the woes of the world then and thereafter.

She did not repulse him, but said: "Come and sit down here and I will tell you something," and they took their seat side by side on the log at the edge of the wood.

She dried her tears, which had fallen more freely during his avowal, and smiled at him, which made him love her more than ever; for, whatever should happen now, he knew that this kindness of hers was no pretence, to be followed by a cruel disdain, but represented her true feeling for him.

"If you are going away," she said, "we can part as friends, and I am glad of it."

"But if I stay!" he said.

She hesitated, fingering a ribbon of her dress. "Perhaps you won't want to be friends when I tell you—" she said, and broke off without telling him.

He took her hand. He was bold now. "Whatever you tell me," he said, "won't make any difference. I love you, and that is the only thing that matters."

She left her hand in his and smiled at him, but said: "It might matter a little whether I loved you or not."

This enchanted him. He smiled at her in return, and said: "But you do, don't you?"

She sighed. "Perhaps I might have done," she said simply. "But I am engaged to be married, so I am afraid it isn't open to me to love anybody."

This avowal was a shock to him, but he did not quite know what to make of it. He let go of her hand and frowned at her. It was she who had frowned at him, hitherto. "Do you mean to say that you are engaged to be married to somebody you don't love?" he asked her, going straight to the point.

She was unwilling to acknowledge that. "I like him very well," she said. "It has been arranged for a long time. We are to be married when the summer is over, and he will take me away from the circus, for which I shall not be sorry."

Her matter-of-fact tone subdued something of his ardour. He was not at all inclined to acknowledge the rights of any other man over her, but he had to know more about it before he could deal with the coil in which she was involved.

It was a dealer in wild animals to whom her father had betrothed her. He lived hard by the docks of the great city, and received his wares from all parts of the world. He was a rich man, many years older than she was. She would have a settled life, and everything that money could buy for her. Wasn't that the best sort of marriage for a girl who had been roving since her childhood, and was tired of it?

No, Pippin protested fervently; it was the worst sort

of marriage. She had made it plain that she did not love this rich man many years older than herself. It was a wicked thing to marry where no love was, and if she committed that sin she would bitterly repent it.

He moved her, but she tried hard not to let him see it, and would not admit that she was marrying only for the sake of money. "He is a kind man," she said, "and I like him very much. My father is not always kind, and though I have learned how to deal with him I shall be glad to live with somebody else."

"It is he that is driving you to do this wicked thing," cried Pippin. "It might not have been so wrong if you had not met me; but now it is different."

She did not rebuke him for this large assumption, but smiled at him rather sadly. "If I had known you before!" she said. "But I have given my word now."

He protested all the more at that. "You do love me," he said vehemently. "If not so much as I love you yet, you do love me."

She would not say that she didn't, but looked away, and said in a low voice: "We are quite different. You are very young, and perhaps you have never loved a girl before. But—"

She did not go on. Perhaps she wanted to know whether her hazard was true.

Pippin vowed that she was the first girl he had ever loved, quite unmindful of his cousin Alison, who was waiting for his return in the white house on the downs so many miles away. But it was true that, although he had always loved Allison, there had been no passion in his love for her.

He told her of the home that was his, the old gabled

house sunning itself among its orchards and wide pastures, where there was everything for a woman to make herself happy as well as a man, and love and warmth for whomever he should bring to it.

She sighed again. "Such things are not for me," she said, and no warning came to him that she was right and that the life he was so ardent in offering her would not for long satisfy the woman she had been trained to be.

But having said that, she did not refuse to listen to him further as he pressed her, all the more vehemently for what she was holding back from him.

She would not say that she loved him, though it was plain that something in her was melting towards him. She was passive under his pleading, but he had again possessed himself of her hand, and she left it in his while she sat with downcast eyes which were now moist again.

Suddenly she snatched away her hand and sprang up. They had been so taken up with one another that neither of them had heard an approaching footstep. By the way she had come Herr Schwenck had also come, whether under some suspicion or merely for a random stroll, which would have been unlike him, Pippin never knew, and now stood before them with red and angry face, and voluble words proceeding from his thick lips.

Only a few minutes later, Pippin was sitting alone where he had been sitting when Rosie had come upon him. Her father's harsh angry voice was in his ears, but all the insulting things he had said were overborne by her one word of "Good-bye," which she had spoken in a low voice with her eyes upon his.

That night Pippin left the circus, after a scene with

Maddock, which ended on a more friendly note than had seemed likely at its beginning. "Well," said Maddock, at last, when he had seen that he was determined to go, "I never expected to keep you long, and it's quite true that I can do without you. So if part we must, let us part friends. We have had some pleasant times together, but your interest in natural science is not so great as I had thought. I must pursue my studies by myself."

No doubt Maddock, who was for himself first and last, though he had something to spare for others in between, had got less pleasure out of Pippin's companionship than he had anticipated; and he had told him more than once of late that he was not putting the same vigour into his act of Dick Turpin as he had begun with. He was a man who would rather have peace than strife, other things being equal, and Pippin was glad to take leave of him on a note of agreement. He had said nothing to him of Rosie Schwenck, but thought it was not improbable that her father would do so, and wanted to be out of it all before this came about.

Night had fallen before he had finished with Maddock, who had been away all day. He left him to suppose that he would be setting off early the next morning, but he had already made his preparations, and within a few minutes of his leaving Maddock's caravan he had turned his back upon the tents and vans of the circus. He would have liked to say good-bye to one or two, and especially to the little child with whom he had made friends. But better away at once!

He stood for a moment outside the caravan in which he knew that Rosie was, and then stepped out into the night, the load on his heart heavier than that on his back.

CHAPTER XX

PIPPIN ACQUIRES A FRIEND, AND WALKS ON

Pippin walked throughout the night. He wanted to put the miles between him and the girl he loved but would never see again. He was as unhappy as only those can be who are bereft of hope, and these are more often the young than the old; for in youth the lesson has not yet been learned that the strong desires of the moment will lose their strength, and others will take their place. Underneath this black cloud he could not reason his way into the sunshine that lay ahead of him; he could only oppose a stoic endurance to his misery. But in all the passing to and fro in his mind of memories and regrets the worst thought of all, that he would never see her again, became in some sort a stay to him, and by clinging to it he passed through and out of his dark time, but not until many days had gone by.

The first signs of dawn found him many miles from the town where he had left the circus. He was on a high and desolate moor, with no signs of habitation in sight, but only the road beckoning him on to where human life would begin again beyond the rim of the hills. As the light grew stronger his thoughts took some colour from what he could see of his surroundings, and were perhaps even a little solaced by them, though he was not conscious of any lightening of his mood.

The rabbits were out on the close nibbled turf, soaked in dew. The moorland birds were busy over their day's

work of providing themselves with provender. Now and then the agile upland sheep, who roamed the wastes of grass and rock and heather in almost as wild a state as the birds and the rabbits, scurried out of his way and then turned to look at him walking doggedly along the highway. All these animals were fulfilling the laws of their being, in freedom. They were not thrown into misery by the processes of the mind, and if danger or terror came to them, the moment the oppression was lifted it was clean forgotten. But there was no freedom for man, so much higher than they, who must keep to the trodden road, wherever it might lead him, and if he left it for a time must get back to it under pain of being lost altogether.

The sun came up over the dark moor and turned it to burnished gold, with embroideries of delicate fresh green, and the larks mounted up into the sky to sing its praises. Pippin was a thought comforted in spirit by its majestic uprising, but put the comfort away from him and plodded on. He was both tired and hungry now, but his sudden departure had not prevented his providing himself with some food, which he ate as he walked along. It would be time to rest when he should be so tired that sleep would be a certainty, and there were signs of trees and a kinder country far ahead of him, in which he could find some sheltered spot in which to lay himself down.

The sun was well up by the time he had mounted the last long hill at the edge of the moor, and saw spread out in front of him a wooded valley which had drawn to itself dwellings of men to till and tend its fertile acres. A brawling brook had come out of the hills to meet him and

keep him company down the last mile of road. He drank from its sparkling waters, and presently when it ran under a stone bridge and went singing off to explore the recesses of a wood he followed it, to find a little grassy lawn shaded by oaks, which he took for his bed. He had no sooner laid his head upon the pack he carried than he fell asleep.

He did not waken until some hours later, and might have slept longer still if he had not been roused by a damp touch on his cheek, which in springing up in sudden alarm he found to be from the nose of a dog that stood before him waving a friendly tail.

The dog was a retriever, only just out of puppyhood, but grown to its full height and glossy perfection of coat, a nobly bred animal whose kindness and loyalty shone through his liquid brown eyes and made their way straight to Pippin's sore heart. For even upon his sudden waking, in some alarm, his unhappiness had awakened too and lay in the back of his mind ready to show itself when he should have time to attend to it. The dog had not drawn back at his starting up, but stood as if ready to be thanked for his greeting and invited to further demonstrations of affection. His look and attitude were so expressive that they seemed to translate themselves into spoken words.

"Come now! You never expected to find a friend here when you woke up, did you? Aren't you glad? What are we going to do together?"

Pippin put his hand on the dog's smooth head, and was immediately overwhelmed with caresses, accompanied by ecstatic wrigglings of the body and sweepings of the feathered tail.

"Ah! There's nothing like love in the world, is there? You and I were made for each other. I can't tell you what it means to me to find you here."

It had just occurred to Pippin that the dog must have an owner, who could not be far away, when he saw a big man in the dress of a gamekeeper coming towards him. He was a lowering disagreeble-looking sort of fellow, and eyed Pippin with some suspicion, but said nothing as he passed except to call roughly to the dog.

The dog made motions of obedience with his head and tail but snuggled closer to Pippin. "I shall have to go with him if he insists upon it, but you have taken my fancy and I'll stay with you if you can arrange it with him."

"He's a nice dog this," said Pippin in a friendly tone.

The man stopped and looked at them both. "He's a well-bred dog," he said, "and worth a lot of money."

The dog snuggled up still closer. "You heard that! Give him a lot of money, and I can stay with you."

Pippin understood both the man and the dog. "Will you sell him?" he asked.

The man said he would, and after another look at Pippin named a high price.

"Oh, pay it," said the dog, "if you've got it. What's money compared with all the love I shall give you?"

Pippin wanted love at that moment, more than anything. As it chanced, the sum that the man had mentioned was exactly that which he had brought away with him for his work in the circus. There seemed to be some fitness in using it in this way, and he agreed at once to the price.

The man seemed to regret that he had not asked more. "I don't know that I want to sell him after all," he said. "He'll take a lot of prizes when he's older."

Pippin was ready enough to see what he would be at. He put his purse back in his pocket. "If you won't you won't," he said. "I know you won't get that money for him anywhere else."

Then the man accepted the price and went off grumbling. The dog was in an ecstasy of pleasure, and Pippin was hardly less pleased at having found this new friend to stay him in his trouble.

"Now what shall I call you?" he said.

It was all one to the dog. He would answer to any name that his dear master fastened on to him. "Ben," suggested Pippin. Yes, that would do capitally. How clever to have thought of it! But it was plain that such a master could be entirely trusted, whatever problem might confront him.

Presently Pippin shouldered his pack and walked on again. The dog leaped about him barking his satisfaction at the prospect of movement, but the moment Pippin had put himself into motion he left him to follow the promptings of his own enquiring mind, though sometimes he would return just to show that they were indeed companions, and no disloyalty was intended by his intermittent rovings.

"Well, dear master, have you ever enjoyed yourself more? I thought I must just come back for a word with you. Now I'll be off again. Hulloa! What's this? Smells to me like rabbit. Shouldn't wonder if one hadn't just gone into this wood. Eh? What's that? Ben! Yes, that's me. What do you want? Oh, very well, if

you'd rather I didn't! I'd do much more to please you than stop chasing a silly little rabbit. What about a race along the road? Must stretch your legs a bit at this time of the morning. Well, if you won't I will. Watch me as far as that big tree."

Pippin hardly knew how much his unhappiness was lessened by the companionship of this new loving friend of his. He watched him and laughed at him, and sometimes kept him by his side to talk to him. But in the main trouble of mind still held him, memories ever renewing themselves, and longings so strong that he was more than once minded to turn round and retrace his steps to where he had come from, even if it were only to solace his eyes with one more look at the face of the girl he loved and set off again. But temptations of the mind are often subdued by actions of the body. When he was most beset in this way his feet carried him forward on his road, and he was just able to refrain from the effort of will that would have halted them and turned them back.

Pippin was making for the sea, which was some days' march from where he had left the circus. The sea, with its wide free spaces and the unhindered sky over it, is a great solace to minds in perplexity. It bears witness to that infinity from which we came and to which we shall return, in the contemplation of which the greatest troubles of mankind are no more than the momentary fluttering of an insect's wing. He had lived his life within sound and sight of the sea, and in this first serious disturbance of mind that had ever come upon him he turned to it instinctively. He was further now from the great city than when he had started on his journeyings; but he was in

no hurry to reach it. The lesser towns of which he had had experience had made it seem less desirable to him, and his inclination to walk through the country in freedom of body and as much as might be of spirit had revived, though not in its first strength and freshness.

His road lay across the lonely moors, and through valleys which lay between them. Sometimes he walked for hours together as on the first day without meeting any of human kind; sometimes habitations around him were plentiful, and he could have had companionship on the road if he had desired it. But he was still sore from the wound to his heart, and in no mood to adapt himself to the ways and thoughts of others. He was content with the company of his dog Ben, who adapted himself to his, as far as in him lay. A dog who loves his master has no desires of his own strong enough to interfere with that single-minded devotion. Though on a lower scale of being than man, and upheld by none of the hopes of reward which encourage men to subdue their carnal desires, he responds promptly to the higher call of love and duty. His master can do no wrong in his eyes. If he is unjust or even cruel the dog will take punishment as his desert, though he does not understand it; and if tyranny relaxes ever so little he will forget it all and show love and gratitude for the relenting. Ben, with but a few months of life behind him, and a few years at most in front, knew already that love was the greatest thing in the world, and would follow its rule to the end. He trusted in Pippin for everything, and supported him in his trouble by that devotion.

On the second evening the man and the dog came upon a moorland village, after covering many miles of road.

Pippin was hungry and weary of foot, and Ben walked at his heels instead of scampering off hither and thither on his own devices.

The first dwelling they came upon was a little farm some way apart from the village. There was a stone-built house, in a little garden, and a few fields reclaimed from the moor. In the garden was a long row of straw beehives, and a notice on the gate advertising the sale of honey, and also of refreshment for travellers. Refreshment was what Pippin most wanted at that moment, so he went through the garden and knocked at the door.

As he stood waiting to be let in, Ben squatting on his haunches at his feet and looking up in his face with full confidence that something would come out of this of benefit to them both, voices were heard from inside the house, a woman's voice raised in shrill annoyance, and a man's in quieter remonstrance. Pippin knocked again more loudly. The voices ceased, and footsteps came towards the door.

It was opened by a youngish man in his working clothes, which though worn and stained were of better quality than those of a field labourer, and had something reminiscent of the stable about them. The man was tall and thin and had a queer twisted smile on his shaven face, which was much lined, and browned by the sun. He limped badly, with one leg shorter than the other. It was plain by the smile that whatever sharpness had marked the conversation in which he had just taken part had not been on his side. Ben made haste to express his approval of him with a nose poked forward and waggings of his tail. "This is a man you may trust, master. I am never mistaken in such matters."

Pippin asked if he might have the refreshment announced for travellers, and the man scratched his close-cropped head and laughed. He did not reply directly, but called out, with a turn of the head towards the room from which he had come: "Here's a traveller, dear heart! Now what did I tell you?" Then he stood aside and said: "Come in, sir, and we will see what we can do for you."

Ben pushed by them both and ran into the room. Before Pippin could follow him there was a shriek of dismay, and the angry woman's voice was raised again in protest at this intrusion. Pippin entered with apologies and assurances that his dog was harmless, but Ben had already satisfied his curiosity upon what the room might contain, and was assuring his master that small notice need be taken of the person whom he had unwittingly alarmed.

In appearance she was not what Pippin had expected to see. She stood by the window, a woman nearly as tall as her husband, and of about the same age. Her face had the remains of good looks that must have been hers in her earlier youth, but was marred by an expression of extreme ill-content, which was not of the moment but had set a permanent mark on it. What was most noticeable about her, in this rather poorly furnished cottager's room, with a husband hardly above the rank of a labourer, was that she was dressed as a lady of some quality, and in spite of her storming tongue and disagreeable look showed other marks of higher breeding.

Fortunately Pippin's appearance pleased her, for she smiled graciously on him and said: "I was startled by your dog, but I see there is nothing to be frightened of." She made a motion of amity towards Ben, who was settling himself to sleep on the hearthrug, but though he looked

at her out of a half opened eye he made no sign of accepting it.

"Now can we give this young man some tea?" her husband asked. "It's a fact, sir, that we only put up that notice this morning, after a few words about it, and we have taken no steps yet to supply what we offer. But I dare say we have enough of our own, and if you'll wait a moment I will see what can be done."

His wife made no sign either of acquiescence or refusal, and he went out of the room. The lady motioned Pippin to a seat, and took one herself. She was dressed in outdoor attire, and seemed to think that an explanation of that and other matters was the first thing necessary.

"This is a very dull place you have come to," she said. "Nothing goes on in it from one year's end to the other except some old-fashioned dancing sometimes on summer evenings. I was just going to the village to look on at it, and my husband had promised to go with me. I had been dressed and waiting for him for half an hour and he comes in in his working clothes and expects me to go with him like that. Surely I have enough to put up with, married to a man who was nothing but my father's groom, without being made a laughing stock to all the clowns and trollopes of this wretched place he has brought me to!"

Pippin was quite at a loss what to reply to this, but apparently she only wanted a listener, for she went on: "I dare say it surprises you to find a woman such as I am married to a man like that. He is a very wicked man. He took advantage of my youth and innocence of the world to make love to me, who was very far above him. I was not happy at home, for my father was a harsh

man and my mother was dead. He persuaded me to run away with him and get married, and my father never forgave me. I have never forgiven myself either. I have led a life of poverty and misery, when I might have had a very different lot. And all because I listened to a deceiver, who had some good looks then, whatever he may be now, and who swore that I should never repent trusting him. Ah, how bitterly I do repent it, every day of my life! The law ought to prevent such things. Men are punished for much less crimes than he committed, and yet he goes free and laughs at the world, while I his victim shall live in misery as long as my life lasts."

She dissolved in tears. Pippin was made excessively uncomfortable, but in his inexperience was not without some sympathy for her, though from what he had already seen of her husband he was inclined to think her blame of him too absolute.

The husband came back into the room at that moment. When he saw his wife in tears his face changed, and he said tenderly: "Ah, now, don't take on, dear heart. I was a brute to cross you, but there was such a lot of work to get through, and I wasn't feeling like turning myself into a gentleman just for the hour I could spare for the dancing. Now why shouldn't you go up to the green, and when this young man has had his tea and rested a bit perhaps he'll join you on his way to the town. Then you'll have a handsomer beau than ever I can make you, however I dress myself up."

Pippin's sympathies had now veered to the side of the husband. He was not anxious to squire the wife anywhere, and he still had eight or nine miles to walk to the seaside town where he was to sleep; but he made

haste to offer himself, and the lady with a glance at his good-looking youthful face and trim figure, graciously accepted his offer and left the house, without a word to her husband, whose offence still rankled. He was limping in and out of the room, spreading the tea-table, deftly enough, as if he was quite used to this kind of work, which might have been expected to be performed by the woman of the house.

"Ah, the poor soul!" he said, with a glance at her through the window walking down the garden path. "It's a trying life for one brought up as she was. Now I'll be bound that it surprised you to find a lady of that quality married to a common bee-keeper. It's a sad life she's had from the very start of things, and I wish I could do something to make it brighter for her. If I hadn't had the bad accident I did soon after we were married I might have got on and made more money. Then she wouldn't ha' felt she'd come down so. It's a hard thing for a woman to come down in the world, young master. Now I think here's everything ready for you. If you'll allow me I'll drink a cup of tea with you myself. I shall be glad to sit down for half an hour, for my hip is bad to-day. Happen there's thunder somewhere about. That bone of mine tells me the weather that's coming better than any glass that was ever made."

If the bee-keeper was responsible for the victualling of his house, he had made as good a job of it as any woman could have done. There was a crisp-crusted loaf of home-made bread, rich yellow butter, and heather scented honey oozing out of its comb. The tea was of no super-fine quality, but there was thick cream to drink with it. Pippin was almost ashamed of the appetite with which

he fell upon this good fare, but his host encouraged him with one of his queer sidelong smiles. "I don't eat much myself," he said. "I get too tired for it. But I like to see a hearty appetite. Well there now! If we haven't forgotten the dog! Poor old fellow, then! I've got just the thing for you in the larder. Wait a minute now, and I'll get it for you."

He was up and out of the room, and immediately returned with a mutton bone, with which Ben, who had roused himself and shown his surprise at being left out of the feast, was made content on the doorstep. Then he sat himself in his wooden arm chair again with all the signs of a man very tired in body, though his talk was vigorous enough, and he seemed pleased to have somebody with whom to exchange it.

Pippin asked him about the accident to which he had alluded. "Well, it was a bad business coming when it did," he said. "It's a queer life I've had altogether, and I can't be quite sure that I acted right in it when I married a lady I'd perhaps no right to. I'll tell you my story, if you'd like to hear it, and if you say you think I'm not much to blame, why it will be some relief to me; for I can't do as much for my poor wife as I should like, and there come times when she feels it more than ordinary. She's taking it hard just now, poor soul, and . . . Well now, I should like to ask you as a young man of education, which I never had much of, whether you think I did right or not at that time I'm going to tell you of."

"I'm pretty sure that whatever you did it wasn't far wrong," said Pippin; "but let me hear all about it."

So the bee-keeper began his story.

CHAPTER XXI

PIPPIN HEARS A TALE AND GIVES ADVICE

"I was brought up in a stable," said the bee-keeper, "and when I was a boy I loved horses better than anything else. I love them now, but somehow the wish to spend my life among them has gone from me. I was sent to school, but learned very little, and was taken away as soon as was allowed, and I'm sorry for that now, because if I knew more that comes out of books there wouldn't be such a difference as there is between me and my wife, who was sent out of England for her education and can speak French just as easily as her own language. She's a woman of very great gifts, and they are all wasted here.

"It was my father's wish to get me into a racing stable, for I was a good rider from an early age, and lightly built, and he thought I might have become a famous jockey. Perhaps I might, but the only chance I ever had was spoiled by my getting some illness, and when I was well enough the place was filled up. So I went from one private stable to another, until I was about twenty, when I settled down as head-groom to a gentleman—I won't tell you his name—in this county, who kept a good stable of hunters, and there I stayed for three years.

"I was a wild lad in the way of running after the lasses, and my poor wife often brings that up against me now. And I used to drink too, not enough to get me into trouble, but more than was good for me, and

she brings that up against me too, though I haven't set my lips to strong liquors for years past. But the fact is I wasn't much good as a young man, and the faults I committed were just such as a lady born would find it least easy to put up with. Still, she was young herself then, and I was an active merry young spark, and I suppose that was something to balance the bad in me.

"Well, if I drank a little more than was good for me now and then, my master drank a great deal more than was good for him all the time. He was a hard cruel man besides, and they told me that he'd driven his wife into her grave, which was before I went there. The young lady was his only child, and he'd sent her off to school in France, and kept her there till she was grown up. It wouldn't have been a house for a young girl to live in when I first went there, for he didn't care what opinion he was held in by his neighbours, and followed all the desires of his nature, which was low and base in every way that I could ever see. We men about the place all hated him, but he paid us well and left us alone for the most part, so many stayed on with him for years.

"Then he married again, and the woman he married wasn't such as to make the house any better for a young girl to come to. But he had his daughter home, and then it was that the trouble began.

"Ah, she was a pretty young creature in those days—too pretty to suit her stepmother, who was jealous of her. The neighbours of my master's quality would ask her to their houses, but they wouldn't have anything to do with his wife, and presently she wasn't allowed to go to them. Her father didn't seem to have the natural

affections of a father for her, and whatever his wife told him to do he did. He was drinking very hard by that time, and she had a hold over him and kept it.

"The only thing the young lady was allowed to do that pleased her was to ride, and it was me that generally attended her. I won't say I was in love with her, for she was so far above me that it would ha' seemed waste of time, and I wasn't losing time in those days over my love-making; but of course I admired her, and I was flattered when she took to making me ride by her side and talking to me. Things were in such a bad way in the house that she didn't keep off them for long, and presently it was all she talked about. I was young and easily worked on, especially by a woman in trouble, and I used to get so hot over her wrongs that for a very little I would have had it out with the master and his wife too. But that wouldn't have done her much good. She used to say it did do her good to talk to me about it all, and of course I was flattered by that too, and I dare say I became more free with her than was right for a servant with his young mistress, though I'll swear there was never anything but respect in my mind for her, and I'd no thought of stepping over the bounds.

"Well this went on for nearly a year from the time she first came home. Then one day we set out for a ride over the moors. I rode behind her as usual till we were out of sight of the house, and then she stopped for me to come up with her. I'd noticed that she looked queer-like when she mounted, and as I rode up she began to cry and said a dreadful thing had happened. Her stepmother had made a scene with her about me, and accused her of—well, I can't bring my lips to say it. But

I was to be sent away, and she said I was the only friend she had in the place, and she couldn't bear it.

"That set me all on fire. 'It's a wicked thing to say,' I said, 'but if it isn't true of you it is of me. I do love you,' I said, 'and though I'm only a servant, and you're a lady born, if you trust yourself to me I'll swear you shall never regret it.'

"Ah, if I'd known! I meant everything I said, but it was beyond my power to carry out. I've done my best. No, I don't think there's anything I can reproach myself with since then. I've done my best. But my best wasn't enough. It was then and there I made the mistake, if anywhere."

"What mistake?" asked Pippin stoutly. He had found himself liking this man more and more as he had disclosed himself in telling his story, and the impression that the wife had made upon him was not such as to arouse an equal sympathy. "What mistake? You say she was unhappy, and you offered her protection and the love of an honest man. What could she have to complain of in that? It was an honour you did her."

"She says I took advantage of her, poor soul. I wasn't her equal, and that counts for a lot in marriage. She overlooked that when I was young and ardent. Oh, I did love her, and I love her still. I suppose it had been coming on all the time, and when she accepted me as her lover it all came rushing out. I felt as if I could move mountains for her. If she wanted wealth I could earn it for her. I would give her everything she had had at home and more besides, for I'd give her all the love I had in my heart, and she'd had no love to sweeten her life in her home. I was as proud and happy as a king

as we rode together, and I couldn't help it showing when I took her home, for it was that brought on the catastrophe."

"She did accept you then?"

"Yes. I was to go off and get into a position in which I could keep her. I knew I could do it. I could do anything. Then I was to ask for her boldly, and if her father refused, as we thought he would, she was to come to me. For she was of age, and he couldn't have stopped her.

"But when we rode up to the house her stepmother was waiting for us. And she saw. We thought afterwards that she had seen it coming and wanted it. There was a child of her own on the way, and it would be to her advantage to get her step-daughter out of the house. There was a very ugly scene, which I won't describe to you. I was altogether set above myself, and I spoke to her not as my mistress but as one who was insulting the girl I loved, who looked to me for protection. When it was at its height she flounced into the house and brought her husband out, and I spoke my mind to him too, and raised such a fury in him that he would have horsewhipped me if he had dared. He did raise the whip he carried in his hand, but I seized it from him and broke it and threw it away, and he was very near apoplexy if you could trust to the signs.

"Well, when my poor girl had left the house to ride that morning she had left it for the last time. They wouldn't let her in again. They sent her off with me, anywhere we pleased to go, in her riding habit as she was. They wouldn't even let her have her own clothes. That was the woman, who showed her spite for things I had

said to her, in that way; for the father, angry as he was, had said they should be sent after her.

"I won't go into all that happened immediately after that. People were kind to us. We were married, and I got a place in a livery stable at that town you are going to to-night. An old coachman I had been under owned it, and I made him take me on. Seems to me I could have made anybody do anything for me at that time, for it wasn't for me, it was for her, who was much more to me than I was myself. And I knew that if I laid my course well, the business would be mine some day. Nothing could have stopped me getting on—well, except what did stop me.

"We were happy for a year. I shall always have that to look back upon. I earned good money, and she earned money too, as a riding-mistress. Our story became known, and people took an interest in us, and she made a few friends among people of her own sort. I kept out of the way with them; I wasn't going to drag her down further than I had by marrying her, and I was trying to improve myself all the time so as not to shame her.

"Yes, for a year I was happy. She made me so. She never complained of anything in those days, and I think she was happy too. She used to say she was then, though now—

"Well, it was too good to last. She had to lie up for a child coming. She was very ill, poor soul, and the child died. That was a great grief to me. A sweet little girl it was, and though she only lived a few weeks I loved her very deeply. I'm sure she knew me when I nursed her, and once she smiled at me when I went to her. I'm

sure of it, and I can see her now, the darling little soul. Ah, if she'd only lived!

"You may believe that that heavy sorrow made me all the more tender to my poor wife. She seemed to get over it sooner than I did, but sometimes I think she never did really get over it, for it was never quite the same afterwards. She recovered and went back to her riding, which she liked. It might have gone better again then, but she had only been at it a week when I had my accident. I was trying a hunter for a customer. I got badly thrown. My hip was smashed up, and there was some trouble internally too.

"I was on my back for the best part of a year. I couldn't expect my place to be kept open for me for ever; besides I was told I could never ride again, and it was the saddle part of the business I looked after. I had saved very little, because we expected to be making more soon, and she had been used to so much that it wasn't to be expected she could do with what would have been enough for me. But after a time, poor soul, she had to live very poor, and it was on what she earned that we kept going. When it got very bad she wrote to her father, but he sent back her letter unopened. I don't know what we should have done, but an uncle of mine who owned this little farm, and came to see me when I was laid up, offered me a home here, and said he had always meant to leave it to me. He was a queer crusty old fellow, but good-hearted, and he was kind to me as long as he lived, which wasn't for long after we came here. He and my poor wife didn't get on. I'd brought some of my ways up to hers, but the old man wouldn't. He seemed to take a pride in making himself out rougher

than he really was, and wanted her to work in the house and about the place just as if she might have been one of our sort. But I wouldn't have that, and whatever I could do when I began to get about a bit I did, and presently I got to doing it nearly all. He wasn't ill long when he did begin to fail, and I nursed him, and he was grateful. He left me everything, and there was some money too which he had said nothing about; so I reckoned we had been lucky, and if I worked hard we should have a home together that she needn't be ashamed of after all.

"I wanted to buy some more land with the money the old man had left, and some stock. But the time I'd been ill and so much had depended upon my wife, had tried her hard, and she wanted to go away for a time. I thought it was best, and if she had her holiday with people of her own sort she might come back happier, and we could live together again as we had when we were first married. For things had changed between us, and she wasn't happy with me any longer, poor soul.

"So she went away, and I set myself to do all I could to work the place up, and looked forward to getting more for her in time. The old man had made most of his money out of bees, and had taught me what he knew, and I was interested in it; but thought I could do more with land and stock. However, it's the bees that have been our standby, after all; for I could never get together enough afterwards to buy more land."

"Did she spend it all, then?" asked Pippin.

"Oh, you're not to blame her," said the bee-keeper. "She wasn't brought up to think about money; and as I told you she had been very much tried. She had to go

away. I could see that, and we parted good friends. When she did come back to me—"

"When was that?" asked Pippin, remorselessly. He had heard nothing so far that had made him think well of the wife, though his sympathy with the husband had risen all the time he had been telling his story.

"She was away for a year—rather more than a year," he admitted, reluctantly as it seemed. "Then she came back, and you may judge that I was overjoyed to see her." He sighed. "But I haven't been able to make her happy. I can't give her what she wants and what she ought to have. She misses too much. I ought never to have married her. She was too high above me."

His story had come to an end. He sat in dejection, going over his memories, while Pippin nerved himself to make fitting comment upon what he had heard. He was young and inexperienced in life, but his honesty was too great to allow him to keep to himself what he thought. He cleared his throat, at which Ben, who had slept peacefully through the bee-keeper's narrative, as none of his concern, opened an eye, but satisfied that if blame were coming it was not for him, closed it again.

Pippin thought it well to begin with a recommendation of the wisdom of what he was about to say. "I am younger than you," he said, "but I have been about the world and have kept my eyes open to what goes on in it. And I know a great deal about love, though at present I am unattached." It cost him something to say this, but he thought he could help the bee-keeper most by doing so. "If the lady who is now your wife had begun by pretending to scorn you, and had then acknowledged

that she loved you, but was bound to somebody else, you might—" He had forgotten what this was to have led to, but the bee-keeper did not seem to have been listening, and he began again.

"You say you were happy with her for a year, and you have made it plain, although you have not said a word of blame of her, that when you were ill and she ought to have been most tender towards you, she was thinking only of herself. And it is also plain that she has thought about nobody but herself ever since. If she is not happy, with a good man like you, so anxious to make her so, it is her fault and not yours. Your story had made me very indignant against her. I wouldn't interfere between a man and his wife, but if you want my advice you will change your attitude towards her altogether. You make yourself her servant. She will be much more what she ought to be towards you if you make her yours for a change. What are you doing with the work of the house on you as well as your work outside, while she doesn't put a finger to it? When I marry, if I ever do, but I have almost made up my mind not to, I shall be master in my own house. Every man ought to be that. Women are good for many things, but it is not for them to rule their husbands."

The bee-keeper looked at him, and smiled his queer sidelong smile. "Where you love you want to serve," he said quietly. He rose from the table. "Well, it has done me good to talk to you," he said. "You are very young, but there is something about you that draws confidence. I hope you will be very happy in your life, young sir, and when the time comes you will get a wife to suit you.

But don't take her from a station above your own, or below it either. If you do the one she may get tired of you, and if you do the other you may get tired of her. And now I must go about my work."

As Pippin walked on, with Ben now thoroughly restored gambolling about him, he thought with some vexation that his good advice had been treated with less consideration than it deserved. "If he would take the stick to her, it would do her all the good in the world," he said, and flourished his own stick, to the surprise of Ben who imagined himself guilty of some misdemeanour, and came wriggling up to apologize for it.

As he approached the village he saw groups of people gathered about a grassy space a little aside from the road, from which came the music of a fiddle, and in which country dancing was going on. He was somewhat inclined to join in it, but the evening was drawing on and he had some miles still to go; and besides, the simple play of boys and girls was not for him, disillusioned as he was and feeling himself much aged by what had befallen him. But he stood for a minute to watch from a distance, and thought he saw the bee-keeper's wife, in her large flowered hat, footing the measure, which did not incline him any the more graciously towards her, when he remembered her husband working for her in her home.

A tall stout man in the dress of a farmer came down the path towards him, with a sheep dog at his heels. Ben, not yet of an age to have learned reticence towards those of his kind, made overtures of friendship, which the other dog, too old and patient to resent the indiscre-

tions of youth, received with a remote air, but gave a little growl of warning when they were persisted in.

His master rebuked him, which served for an introduction between him and Pippin, and they walked on together. He was a hearty rugged man with very blue eyes in his red face, and strong white teeth. He spoke in broad dialect and told Pippin that he had never been further than twenty miles from where they were, and never wished to go that far again. He seemed to be very well content with himself and his lot in life, and told Pippin all about his farm and his stock and the money he had lying in the bank. Then Pippin said something about the bee-keeper and his wife, and the farmer's face changed. "That's a woman who ought to have her neck wrung," he said, and Pippin was pleased to have his opinion of her endorsed, though it had not occurred to him to express it so strongly.

"How the old man hated her!" said the farmer. "It was dog and cat between them all the time, and he wouldn't ha' put up with her but he was fond of her husband. She went away for nigh on two years when the old man died, and spent all the money he'd saved up. A good thing if she'd never come back! But nobody else wanted her, and the poor fellow couldn't make enough to keep her in idleness away from him, or I make no doubt she'd have stayed away from him for ever, and gone on bleeding him."

"He told me his story, and asked my advice," said Pippin with an air of some importance. "I told him that if he were to make her serve him for a change instead of his serving her it would do her a lot of good."

"Then you spoke a true word," said the farmer, with a quizzical look at him. "And what might he have said to that?"

Pippin searched in his brain. "He said something about liking to serve a person you loved," he said.

"That's it," said the farmer. "He couldn't do it. He's too good a man. It would do her good, but it wouldn't do him good. Come to think of it, he's better off than she is. For she's thinking about herself all the time, and he's thinking about somebody else. You might not think it to look at me and hear me talk, but I'm a man who holds my religion, and to my mind that's the kernel of the whole nut of it. Now this is where I turn off, but why shouldn't you come along with me and take a bite and a sup, and sleep in a good feather bed instead of the flock you'll get in that place of robbery?"

Pippin thanked him warmly for his hospitality, but said that it was necessary for him to press on. He was not yet cured of his desire for solitude, and for chewing the cud of his own reflections; and he had been talking or listening to talk for two hours past. So the farmer left him, and he walked on alone over the now darkling moor, with something to add to his thoughts as he went.

CHAPTER XXII

THE GREAT MUSICIAN

Pippin walked on across the high moor. He was not quite satisfied with himself, for he thought he might have done more to show his disapproval of the bee-keeper's wife, though it is difficult to see what more he could have done unless he had rebuked the lady to her face; and that would scarcely have helped matters. But when the moral sense of youth is aroused it can only be quieted by giving it vent, and presently Pippin came dimly to see that it was only himself that he would have satisfied by expressing his indignation, and left consideration of the matter.

He returned once more to thoughts of his own affairs, but found that the break in that obsession had somewhat lessened its hold upon him. He did not want this. He wanted to go on loving Rosie Schwenck, and perhaps some day to meet her and prove to her that he no longer loved her; nor did he perceive that these two desires were contradictory. But for the time he allowed himself to anticipate some interest in life apart from her, and this was perhaps the first step in his cure.

He was looking forward with some anticipations of pleasure to the seaside town to which the road was leading him. He had been on the lonely moors for some days, and was ready for a spell of gaiety. It was to be other people whose gaiety he would look on at; for himself such moods were at an end. His youth was behind him;

he was now a strong stern man who would never again yield himself to lightness of heart or behaviour. But he pressed forward over the darksome expanse of moor to where he would be greeted by the light of the town and be once more among the heartening crowd.

He came to the top of a hill, and there was the wide sweep of the bay below him, pricked out with lights where the promenades followed the line of the shore, and behind them the streets of houses large and small, also lit up, more dimly, but so as to cast a radiance over them, descending from the lower slopes of the hill to the water's edge. Pippin paused for a moment to take it all in. He felt some exhilaration at the sight of the town lighted up, which was enhanced by the contrasting solemnity of the sea lying still and immense in the summer night. But it was late. Fatigue and hunger had come upon him again, and he was soon on his way down to his supper and his bed.

The next morning he awoke to the sound of the waves pulsing upon the shore immediately in front of his window. A fresh breeze had sprung up with the morning, but there was never a cloud in the sky and the sea was dancing with myriad points of light, and dotted with the sails of the fishing boats. It was still early, but who could lie in bed with that fresh salty air coming in at the window, and the sun and the music of the waves outside? In a few minutes Pippin and Ben were on the sands, and in a few minutes more in the water. Then the advancing burden of age which Pippin had felt so heavy upon him during the past days dropped away. He was happy again, laughing for the pleasure of his youth and strength as he breasted the salt water and played with his

dog, inseparable from him in one element as upon the other.

He stayed for some days in this town, and made friends among the holiday makers, and particularly with the children who played upon the sands, helping them with their games and their castle buildings, a companion to be greeted with shouts of welcome whenever he appeared among them, and to be followed and imitated in all things. It was with the more simple folk that he consorted, whose recreation chiefly was to sit and walk by the sea, to rest themselves for a time from the toil to which they would presently return. Even the boys and girls of his own age led an idle life of preference, though there was much pairing among them, and their brains were busy enough if their bodies were quiescent. In the evening they would resort to the cheaper forms of entertainment provided for such as they, but Pippin made no confessions of having recently been one of those who provided them. He was coming to be a trifle ashamed of that episode in his life, but also hugged some pride at having been behind the scenes and come out again among the spectators, disillusioned.

In his modest lodging was a young man who had not come to this place on a holiday, but to prepare the way for a great musician, whose name in letters a foot high was on all the hoardings. The young man's name was Dent. The musician's name was much more complicated, and even Dent seldom called him by it, but in conversation shortened it to Baffy.

Dent was a pale young man with long hair and a very energetic, almost a fierce, manner. He might have been a musician himself from his appearance, but he was not.

He was a writer, and on his own showing a highly skilled one, though a general conspiracy on the part of all those who had to do with introducing the work of a writer to the public had hitherto prevented his gaining his due rewards.

"But some day you will see," said Dent, vehemently. "I shall not always have to do this sort of thing for a living. In my own way I shall be as great a man as Baffy, and if I don't make quite so much money I shall make enough. It is not wealth that I desire. To my mind a great artist, in whatever sphere, gets his chief pleasure in practising his art, and all he ought to want to gain from it is what will enable him to devote himself to it free from the sordid cares of life."

Pippin admired this philosophy. Dent was a young man of superior education, and it seemed to Pippin that he might very well rise to be somebody in the calling he had chosen for himself, if he could only find time to practise it. But he was kept very busy going from one place to another to prepare the way for the glorious appearances of his master, who paid him well but expected to be diligently served in return.

Pippin could not quite make out his attitude to the great musician. Sometimes he would speak of him almost worshipfully, at others with something like contempt. "But I don't see very much of him when we are travelling," he said. "When he comes in I go out. On the whole I prefer that, for I get a few hours to myself."

"I suppose he really is a very great player," said Pippin, who had been impressed by the advertisement that Dent put forth so lavishly.

"The greatest of all," said Dent.

"Then why—?"

"Why don't I want to see more of him than I need? Why because I can distinguish between a man and his art. Baffy is a great artist— a very great artist; but—. Now I'll tell you something about him. Some time ago I wrote a little story founded on his career, and like a fool I read it to him, because I was rather proud of it. He was annoyed, and forbade me to publish it. That's Baffy."

"Why did he refuse to have it published?"

"Why? Because he doesn't like it to be known that his origin was a low one. To my mind it is more to his credit to have made himself what he is than if he had been born to it. He couldn't have been born to the artistic eminence that is his; he would have to work for that in any case. As for the rest, there are thousands of people of no merit whatever as high in the world as he is. It is just one of the things that has come to him, and so is the money that he makes. If I ever become famous as a writer, I will not, no I will *not* allow myself to be led away into prizing the mere accidents of my success. But you shall hear my story, and say whether you don't think it would reflect more credit upon a great artist to have the truth told about him in that way than to conceal it."

They were sitting by Pippin's window, looking out over the sea, upon which the moon was shining. Dent went to fetch his manuscript, and presently returned. "It is not very long," he said in apology.

"I am sorry for that," said Pippin politely.

Then Dent read his little story, which he called

THE MUSICIAN

He was born in a village in the middle of a bare, almost treeless plain. The brown fields stretched away on either side, their dull monotony broken by a sparse network of roads, here and there a farmstead, a hamlet, or a little town, and some leagues away the silver thread of a river.

But at the edge of the plain, far distant, were the mountains, pointing white pinnacles above the desolate winter earth, or in summer swimming in blue vapour.

His father was the village schoolmaster, a disappointed embittered man, miserably poor, nursing a sullen rage against the fate that had cut him off from everything that might have solaced his life, a daily menace to the children whom he taught, an hourly terror to his own, who had lost their mother and were dependent upon him alone.

The child was often hungry, in the winter nearly always cold and miserable, and more unhappy even than a child need be to whom cold and hunger are an accepted part of life.

But the mountains ringing the plain in whose vastness his poor little body seemed to be imprisoned lifted his spirit; the mountains and the mild airs of spring, the flowers in the fields, and the song of the few birds whose notes were heard in that sad country. And when, in the church, the congregation sang in unison, unaccompanied, the music of the Mass, he was strangely moved. It seemed to him that somewhere in the world there was happiness, if he could only find it some day.

His chief friend was a little crippled tailor, who played

a cheap fiddle. It was the only musical instrument he had ever heard. He persuaded his friend to teach him what he knew, and he could soon play better than his master. But he was not satisfied. He craved for something, he knew not what; for something beyond those thin unsupported notes.

When he was ten years old, his father was appointed to a school in a small town. On his first Sunday in church the boy heard the Mass sung to an organ. The organ had only one row of pipes and no pedals, but the harmony of notes, which was new to him, was more beautiful than anything he could have conceived. Some weeks later, when he had arduously scraped acquaintance with the organist, he listened to a fugue of Bach's, played on an old piano. Limitless horizons were opening out before him.

Three years later the organist died, and he was appointed to fill his place. His musical precocity was a source of pride to his employers, who also saved money by filling the place of a man with a child.

Not until he was sixteen years of age had he ever been away from the place in which he was born and the place in which he lived and drudged. Then one day in May he walked thirty miles to the nearest big town, where a great virtuoso was to give a piano recital. He sat in one of the cheapest seats, tired and dusty, and was straightway transported into paradise.

When the Master came out of the hall and crossed the pavement to his carriage, a youth in shabby clothes, thin and poor, with bared untidy hair and wild eyes, pushed through the cheering crowd that thronged around him, seized his hand and kissed it. Before the great man had

recovered from his surprise, the spectre had disappeared.

All through the night, as he tramped the leagues of white road, lit by the stars, back to his home oblivious of hunger and fatigue, that glorious music rang in his head. He heard the silvery chime and tinkle of the treble, the metallic clangour of the bass, the more tuneful mid-notes, the sad and merry airs, the sweet cadences. He marvelled at an instrument so mechanical which yet at the bidding of a master registered such an infinite gradation of sounds and moods. And he marvelled at the genius that could so concentrate itself as to evoke that perfect response. What had he known of music before he had heard the king of instruments and the king of piano-players? Thenceforward his path was clear.

Two years later he was living in a garret in a poor part of a great musical city. He had a table, two chairs, and a box for furniture. His bed was on the floor. The boards were uncarpeted, the window uncurtained. But he had a piano, upon which he practised for many hours a day.

The privations he endured were greater than those he had known in his childhood. He was always hungry now, except when his master invited him to a meal; in the winter he was always cold, for he could not afford a fire. No one who had not been brought up to a life of hardship could have gone through those terrible years of labour.

At times he was more unhappy than he had ever been, for he knew despair. This was when the unspeakable drudgery to which he submitted himself seemed to be failing in its end, when he would practise for days and weeks together without a sign of progress, or when his master rated him.

Then he would wake up one morning and sit at the keyboard, to find that he had moved a step forward. Or an encouraging word would blow the failing spark of his ambition into new flame.

With immense meticulous labour he brought his muscles under control, till his forearms were like bundles of steel rods, his neck and shoulders inured to fatigue, his wrists and fingers supple and strong. He could run his hands over the keys with a touch as light as gossamer, and every note clear and even; and he could arouse such clanging reverberations as would have seemed impossible to one of his slender physique.

It took him two years to reach this point, and he was often in such pain and trouble at the end of the day that he wept as he laid himself down on his bed.

In the remaining two years of his apprenticeship his life was brighter, but still full of difficulty, and sometimes of distress. He had to learn to interpret the meaning of the composers whose works he played. He descended into the depths again, for half-starved and miserable in body as he was his brain was now less alert to grasp and invent, and his master, who never spared his pupils, stormed at him for stupidity. "You can play the notes better than anybody," he shouted, "but you cannot play the music. Go back and think."

He was kicked away in the third summer to take a month's holiday, and returned with his understanding braced. But still there remained months and months of arduous toil, and a slow unequal climb to the point at which he should be able to see, and take advantage of what he saw.

Sometimes, after long effort and endless repetition, the

perfect phrase would ring out as if by magic, disappear, perhaps for days, come out again, and gradually be captured wholly, a matchless possession. Then the whole would be built up, and he was eager, grudged no pains, laughed for pleasure, and felt the glow of inspiration.

Those gleams of pleasure became more frequent as the months went by, and during the last summer of his preparation he would sometimes lean out of his window high above the narrow street and dream dreams of the future. For he was still very young, although he had gone through a life time of labour.

Now, whenever he plays in public, a slender loose-haired figure, with thin hands and melancholy far-seeing eyes, alone on the platform, while in rows and tiers before him the packed audience listens entranced to the magic of his music, he is greeted as a portent, half-divine. Stories are told of his royal progress through the world, of the fabulous sum he gains for a performance lasting two hours.

"It is easy to make a fortune with such a gift as that," some say. But others are wiser. They know that in art, as in life, there is no road to perfection except through suffering.

Dent folded his paper. "What do you think of it?" he asked, after a short pause.

Pippin aroused himself. "It is wonderful," he said. "I had no idea that all that labour went to the making of a piano-player."

Dent, upon whose face had come a simper of gratification at the first three words, looked a trifle disappointed at those which followed. "Yes, it is something

like that," he said. "I got it all out of Baffy at one time or another, except the lonely country at the beginning, which was an idea of my own, for I believe Baffy was born in a slum of a great city. But I think the story is improved by my alteration, don't you?"

"Perhaps it is," said Pippin; "but you ought not to have told me."

Dent looked at him shrewdly. "That is a very good criticism," he said. "We are told that art should conceal itself. But I was treating you rather as a critic of my work, which does not profess to be a close transcript from life, though of course it must be made to look like it. What I meant to ask you was whether you don't think it is well written."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Pippin, "but I don't understand much about those things."

"Well," said Dent, after a pause of reflection, "the story did make an impression on you. You said that it was wonderful—the career of the musician. That was exactly the effect I wished to make on my readers. As to how I did it, that is my affair, and I see that you refuse to make it yours. You are quite right. It is not the business of the reading public to judge of how things are done. It should be enough for them that they *are* done. You have pleased me very much by the way you have taken it."

Pippin was relieved to find him so readily pleased, for he had seemed to be invited to a higher degree of appreciation than he had actually expressed. "I suppose you must go through a very difficult training for writing as well as for music," he hazarded.

"You go through hell," said Dent quite cheerfully.

"You will never be much good at any art unless you descend sometimes into the depths. I have tried to express that in my little story. We artists are not as other men. Our rewards are greater, but our pains are greater too. I would not change my lot in life, uncongenial as much of it is at present, for the even prosperity and contentment that is yours. Yet yours is a good life too, and as you were born without the creative instinct to urge you on, perhaps you may be thankful for it."

"It isn't only artists who go through hell, as you express it," said Pippin. "My own experience—"

He broke off. Dent was not the man to whom he could unburden himself. He might have been interested in his story, but probably only as material for making one of his own. "Let us go and walk by the sea," he said instead.

Pippin heard the great man play, and by a special favour was introduced to him afterwards, by Dent, who pointed out the advantage of being able to tell his grandchildren in after years that he had shaken hands with a very great man. Dent had a great love of music, though no skill in it himself, and his attitude of reverence towards his master was at its height when he was under the influence of his wonderful playing. He sat by Pippin's side during the recital, and breathed constant amazement, and gratitude for the treat he was enjoying. Pippin was also amazed at the miraculous skill of the performance, which was unlike anything he had ever heard before, but he was unable to disengage his opinion of the artist from that of the man, who was quite unlike the musician in Dent's story. He was short and stout, and it was astonishing that such strength and delicacy of touch could be produced from those pudgy fingers. There was an air of

great self-satisfaction about him, and his highest moments appeared to be those in which he was receiving the plaudits of the audience, which he did with gestures that reminded Pippin of the Signor Franginelli.

He received Pippin graciously, and asked him immediately what he had thought of his playing. Pippin stammered out some words of appreciation which seemed to satisfy him, and then he turned eagerly to an official who had come to give him an account of the money that had been earned by the sale of seats. The result did not please him, and Dent quickly drew Pippin away.

"Money and applause!" said Dent scornfully. "They are the curse of all great artists. Baffy will be in a very bad temper to-morrow, and the fact that he played divinely to-night will not soften it. I am glad that he wants me for nothing to-night. Before we go to bed I should like to read you one or two more little things I have written. I believe you will like them."

CHAPTER XXIII

A CLOSE CALL

Pippin stayed a few days longer in this sea-side town after his friend Dent had left it to prepare the way for his employer elsewhere. He found the life of it very pleasant, but it was a holiday life, and it was not precisely a holiday for which he had left his home. The money his father had given him was not enough for that, and it was disappearing at a remarkable rate, although he was committing no particular extravagances. If he had kept what he had earned during his few weeks with the circus he would have had enough upon which to enjoy himself here some time longer; but those earnings had been expended upon Ben, and he did not regret them. Ben had been bought for money from a man who had seen in him only a valuable dog. Pippin would no more have sold him than if he had been a human. Friends are not sold for money.

Ben was in the way of enjoying every phase of life in which his master was concerned, but he enjoyed some more than others, and when they took the road again together it was with his ecstatic approval.

"Now we are going to have some real fun once more, and we shall be everything to each other. All these people you have been making friends with have treated me with great amiability, and of course I have responded, because anybody that is good enough for you is good enough for me. But to be perfectly candid with you they bore

me, and I think you are inclined to depend too much upon them. I can give you all you want in the way of companionship, and if you ever regret trusting yourself to me, I'm a bandy-legged German dachshund, and not a fine upstanding English retriever."

They walked along the sea-front very early on a fine sparkling morning. There was scarcely any one about. The holiday-makers would be sleeping for some hours longer; their windows were curtained and blinded, and it was too early yet even for those who prepared the scene for their daily pleasure to have set about it. The fishing-boats were putting out from the harbour at the end of the town, but the pleasure-boats lay on the beach, and only the sea-birds were busy over the long stretch of shore below the railed masonry of the promenade. Presently Pippin left the pavement and walked on the hard sand uncovered by the tide, while Ben careered over it far and wide, always in search of something and forgetting what it was when he had started in chase of it.

On the sands by the rocks and the long sea-ripples Pippin seemed already to have recovered the freedom that is not to be found in towns, though the town stretched away for another mile on his right hand. However overgrown a sea-side town may become it must stop short at the line claimed by the water. Beyond that there is space and freedom, not altered from the time before a brick of it was laid or a human foot trod its brink. So they are wise who take their refreshment from the sea-side, however they may crowd themselves behind it. As he walked along the shore Pippin was inclined to Ben's opinion, that this setting forth on foot was the real

way to enjoyment, and his spirit rose to it hardly less than on his first taking of the road.

But this day's walk was to be the last he was to enjoy for some time. Trouble awaited him, though he was far from expecting it in his happy morning mood.

He kept to the shore all day, walking now upon sand, now along rocky shelves, and sometimes upon grass at the foot of the cliffs. It was a wild and rugged coast, and he passed only one little fishing town huddled in a cleft of the rocks, and a few straggling hamlets or groups of cottages in the twenty miles or so that he covered before the evening. Then his way was barred by a great jutting point of rock. He had either to climb up to the high ground and leave the shore, or make his way round the point among huge tumbled boulders. The tide was on the ebb, and he chose to go round, but wished later that he had ascended the cliff, for at times he had to jump from one rock to the other, and even climb some of them, and progress was slow and difficult. Ben thoroughly disliked it, and sometimes hung back whimpering and had to be lifted.

He got round the point at last and saw that after a short distance he would be walking on flat rock again; but the great stones were piled up here more closely than ever, and he had climbed among them a very little way before he slipped and fell heavily.

He must have struck his head in falling, for he found himself coming out of a sort of dream, with Ben licking his face and touching him gently with his forefoot to arouse him. He was conscious of a dull pain in his leg, which became an acute one when he tried to draw it from between the rocks in which his foot was caught.

He soon realized that he had broken it against a low stone across which he had fallen; but fortunately he had rolled slightly aside, or he would have been lying with his broken leg bent over the stone.

His plight was bad enough even with this small alleviation. His foot was fast wedged between the two great rocks, and he had no power in his broken leg to withdraw it. Nor could he get at his boot to unfasten it. With great pain after a time he managed to wriggle his body so that he could loosen the lace at the top, but that was the limit to which he could reach; by no effort, held as he was, could he have freed himself, and the effort he did make was so painful that he fainted again twice before he gave it up.

But this was not until long after he had fallen, when night was coming on, and hopes of rescue were beginning to fail him.

From where he lay he could see, half a mile away, on the cliff-top where it was declining towards the shore, a low-built cottage with some trees beyond it. It was the only house within sight, but he saw no sign of life about it except the smoke from its chimney. Whatever garden or yard was attached to it must have been on the other side, for it was wild ground covered with gorse and broom and heather between it and the sea. Many times he shouted with the full force of his lungs, even after he had long given up hope of being heard at such a distance. When he shouted Ben barked. Ben was disturbed about him, and tried many times to get him to rise. Pippin tried to send him off to get help, but the poor dog, who would have given his life for him without grudging the gift, could not understand him. His mas-

ter was in trouble; he knew that much; and his place was at his side. As the hours wore on he sat on his haunches beside him, sometimes licking his face, sometimes setting up a mournful howl. Every now and then he would wander off as if he knew that he ought to be doing something. But he would be drawn back again to where his beloved master lay so unaccountably, and all the quicker if Pippin spoke to encourage him to go on. He could only hope that sooner or later his instinct, strong enough now to set him in motion, would lead him to go further for help.

Poor Pippin lay helpless on a little patch of wet beach between the rocks, his head resting on a stone which presently he made softer with his pack. Perhaps he dozed a little, or swooned again from the sharp pain in his head and the dull pain in his leg, and the fear that came upon him when he understood that the tide coming up would drown him if no help had come in the meantime. For now it was night. The stars were shining in a clear sky; there was no wind, and the murmur of the sea came to him gently as if it were still far off. There was a light in an upper window of the cottage which he could see from where he lay. Oh, if only those who were dwelling in it in comfort and safety could know of his plight, lying there with death so soon to come to him! But he was past calling to them now. He knew it was of no use, and instinct bade him reserve all his failing strength. Ben whimpered beside him at intervals, and sometimes left him as at first, but never for long.

Presently the light in the cottage went out, and he was more lonely than he had ever been in his life before.

But with the extinguishing of hope, a calm of spirit

descended upon him. Effort was past, and he no longer raged against his fate. Cold fear gripped him now and again when he thought of death coming to him by the creeping waters, but even that thought slipped from him, and he lay curiously quiescent in mind, though his body was beginning to rack him more sharply than before.

He thought tenderly of those he was leaving behind him, as if bidding them farewell, but was not concerned at the life he would miss, though it was sweet to him. In that hour the passion he had felt for the girl of the circus dropped from him. That had been but a passing impulse, though if it had not been torn up it might have grown into something permanent. The latter days of his life seemed of small account to him now; it was his home to which his thoughts winged their way, and all the years he had spent within its shelter. His brain roamed idly over many little episodes of his childhood and youth, and set before him a thousand pictures. His father and mother and his cousin Alison chiefly vivified them, but his friends among those who had lived about his home flitted in and out of his consciousness too. He was so interested in his thoughts that for a time they were stronger than the pain he was suffering.

But the pain was always increasing, and presently his thoughts began to wander. When this happened he lost account of time. The stars shifted above him, but sometimes after what had seemed immense periods of time they stood in the same place, and sometimes they seemed to have taken a leap onwards while he had closed his eyes for a second.

At last he awoke as out of a long quiet dream. The sky was light, the sound of the waves was in his ears.

He was conscious of no pain or distress, and it seemed to him only natural that Alison should be coming towards him with Ben at her side, but Alison not as he had last seen her, but as she had been when they were boy and girl playing together. He was pleased that she had come, and uttered her name, and then fell contentedly asleep again.

He awoke to find himself in bed in a low white-washed room with a latticed window open towards the sea, which he could see sparkling in the sunshine from where he lay. He felt greatly at ease, though there was a sense of being bound about his head and body. But he did not want to stir a muscle or to set his brain working. There were people in the room who would do all that was necessary for him, either with brain or body—an old woman with a gnarled kindly face, and a grizzled man with a medicinal scent upon him. There was some low talk, and something was given him to swallow, and then once more he fell asleep.

At his second waking memory returned in a flash, and it was with no surprise that he saw sitting by the window a young girl, with his dog Ben lying at her feet. It was she who must have brought rescue to him. She was some years younger than Alison, a bud of a girl just growing into womanhood, and not much like her in feature; but she had the same sweet frank look, and no injustice had been done to his cousin in the confusion of his thought.

She looked towards the bed and saw his eyes upon her, and sprang up with a sudden blush. Ben sprang up too, and barked in his excitement, which sent a thrill of pain through Pippin's bandaged head. She held the

dog to prevent his leaping upon his beloved master, now restored to him, and went to the door to call the old woman. Pippin did not see her again for some days after that, and Ben was kept from his room, while he made his first conscious painful steps towards recovery. These, on account of his youth and health, were unhindered, though slow, and after some days he was himself again, but forced to keep to his bed for the present.

The doctor came frequently to see him, and liked to sit and chat by his bed. He had spent the greater part of his life in this sparsely inhabited country, riding an incredible number of miles to see his patients in all weathers. He was as hard as an oak, but with a soft core of heart. He was a bachelor, which was perhaps fortunate, for his earnings would hardly have sufficed for more than one; but he seemed to be completely satisfied with his lot in life. He lived in a cottage not far from where Pippin was lying, kept two horses for his work, and when he was not on his rounds made himself comfortable with a pipe and a glass and a book. He saw his friends, in one place or another, every day, and showed a pride in the welcome he could be sure of, wherever he went. He told Pippin a good deal about himself, and about the people whom he visited in the farms and cottages of the wide area which he covered. But he told him first how very fortunate he was to find himself lying in a soft bed instead of beneath the ground. This was on the first occasion that his patient was able to listen to any talk, and not for some days after he had been rescued.

"You have your good clever dog to thank for it," he said, "and my little friend Lydia, who was waked by him.

You owe me some thanks too, and the men who carried you up the cliff. You were very near to your end, young man; there's One above to whom you might put up a word of thanks too, if you're old-fashioned enough to believe in what you can't see but know well enough is there to look after you. I mustn't talk too much now, but you've turned the corner, and it won't do you any harm to think a little of what you have to be grateful for."

Mrs. Collinson, the old woman to whose cottage he had been brought, was an indefatigable nurse, as long as Pippin needed one. She and Lydia, her granddaughter, had all the work of their house to do, and also of the few acres of land which formed their holding, but the doctor told him he could not have been better looked after if he had been in a hospital, with nurses about him whose only duty was to tend the sick. "The clever doctors would turn up their noses at my medical knowledge," he said, with a smile on his rugged face, "but there's heart as well as brain in doctoring, and it's the same with nursing. Nursing is a good test of what a woman is worth. Very few men make good nurses, but a woman has that power of forgetting herself entirely, and giving all she has to her patient. She will go without sleep, and has to be driven to eat when she is engaged in fighting for a life; and very often the life isn't worth fighting for, or the end of it is never in doubt, and she is bound to lose in the struggle. But it's all one to her. A woman in a sick room is one of the noblest sights on this poor earth. But when you have lived on this earth as long as I have you will find that there is more of good in it than evil, and the lowly places are those in which you will find it."

He treated the old woman with a rough jocularity, which did not displease her, though her granddaughter sometimes fired up against him on account of it. It was clear that he loved both of them, and he would encourage the girl in her attack, until her indignation would subside, and she would laugh and say that he was an old bear, but she supposed she must forgive him.

"These are the sort of people," he told Pippin, "who give you a good opinion of your fellow-creatures. You find them more often among the poor than among the rich, though among the few rich I have known in my life I have found good people too, but only those who sit light to their riches. I suppose that's what the Good Book means by being poor in spirit. I knew this old lady here when she was a young married woman, with a husband who wasn't much good to her or to anybody else. She had a son who was worse still, and she lived through years of trouble with both of them, and never complained. Now she has come out into tranquillity towards the end of her life, and well she deserves it. My little friend Lydia is the daughter of a bad man and a bad woman, if you can say that anybody is really bad; but the badness has skipped her. She has been with her grandmother, luckily for her, ever since she was a baby, and a comfort to her for all the evils of her earlier life. She'll grow up into a great prize for some man or other, but it's quite likely that she'll give herself to somebody who isn't worthy of her, and have a life of trouble like her grandmother. That's often the way of it; but if a sensible young man came along who could judge of a real treasure when he saw one, he could save

her from that and do himself a good turn into the bargain."

Pippin imagined himself invited to declare himself as that young man; but Lydia was still a child in his eyes, and he had no inclination towards her except as a child friend. But on that plane he loved her. She would keep him company while he still lay in bed helpless, and talk to him brightly about all the little events and interests of her life, and particulary about the great event that had come into it of her finding him insensible among the rocks, with the waters surging very near to his destruction.

"I don't know how long Ben had been barking outside," she said. "Granny and I sleep very soundly, for we have a great deal to do in the day; and she is rather deaf besides. So she never heard him at all, but I did seem to have been hearing him for a long time before he woke me up at last, and I got up and went to the window. He was so excited at seeing me, the dear dog, and he seemed to be telling me to make haste and come with him."

"I had tried to make him understand that he must go and find help," Pippin said; "but he would never go far from me. What made him understand at last?"

"Doctor says it was God who called him," said Lydia simply. "Doctor is a very good man, and I believe what he says. Don't you?"

"Yes, I do," said Pippin seriously. "I haven't thought enough about these things."

"Doctor says this will make you think more about them," said Lydia with a smile; "and me too. He says that like all young girls I am too giddy. But I think he loves me all the same, and I love him. When I got

outside the door, Ben took hold of my skirt in his teeth and dragged me, didn't you, Ben?"

Ben, who was lying between her and Pippin, moved his tail sleepily. Something had happened which it was too much trouble to remember. If they liked to go on talking about it, well and good. It seemed that human beings must always be talking about something or other, but a dog's way was to do what had to be done and then forget all about it. What had to be done now was to go to sleep, unless they particularly wanted him for anything. In this he did not include talk, for which for the moment he was disinclined, though if he were addressed it was only polite to take notice of it.

"I couldn't go fast enough for him," said Lydia. "He ran on in front and then came back and dragged me again. Then he ran off among the rocks to where you were lying. Oh, how dreadful it was to see you lying there! And the tide only a very little way off then! I hardly thought I should be able to get help in time. How I ran up the cliff! It was like as if it was level ground."

She had moved the stone across which he had fallen to support his head above the water, which was licking all round his body when she returned with two men from a cottage hard by, and the doctor.

"Doctor cut off your boot," she said. "I believe it's still there between the rocks. Your poor leg was all swelled up. Oh, it was only just in time that Ben fetched me."

A close call, indeed! Pippin had much to think about after he had heard the full story of his rescue.

CHAPTER XXIV

PIPPIN IS PREACHED AT

Mrs. Collinson's cottage was the only one that could be seen from the spot where Pippin had lain among the rocks of the sea shore, but there was a little group of them near by. The doctor's was the dwelling of a five acre farm, and there were other farmhouses scattered about the sparsely cultivated country which had been reclaimed from the moorland, but no house for some miles with any pretensions to a higher state of gentility. The parish church was four miles away, and was almost unknown to the inhabitants of this outlying settlement. They had a little stone-built chapel of their own, with no regular minister, where, however, no Sunday passed without a service of religion at which the bulk of the scattered community assembled. It was usually conducted by an old farmer who had founded a Sunday School for the children of this place many years before, and had a simple skill in expounding the Scriptures. But he was too diffident of himself to undertake the preaching of a sermon, and English-speaking people love a sermon. This was sometimes supplied by an itinerant preacher, but the great occasions were when the doctor announced himself prepared with a discourse.

This happened two or three times in the year when something had occurred to lift the little community out of the rut of its even life, and expectation ran high of the line he would take about it. A death would some-

times send him into the pulpit, and not always with an encomium on the departed. A marriage was almost sure to do so, for he loved young people, and liked to see two of them settling down together in the world, and to give them advice on how to make the best of one another. He would sometimes address them when a child had been born. He was great upon the care and training of young children, and much sound advice was given in these discourses upon medical as well as moral grounds. He hated slander and backbiting, to which small communities are more than usually liable. Whenever he announced himself for an address when no particular event had occurred, this was pretty sure to be his subject. Those who were prone to ill-natured tittle-tattle feared the lash of his tongue, and he had been known to point a finger at a member of his congregation, and to repeat uncharitable words that had come to his ears. He never touched upon doctrine, and indeed a searching criticism might have failed to find anything specifically Christian in his sermons. But he always based them upon a text of Scripture, which completely satisfied his hearers upon their orthodoxy; and a simple spirit of piety shone through them which touched their hearts.

Pippin's first outing was when he hobbled slowly on a pair of crutches to an evening service at the little chapel. The Doctor was to preach, and it was known to all the congregation that he would preach upon Pippin's rescue from imminent death. Lydia had told Pippin that this would be so, but he had not quite realized the pointed application of the speaker's method, or he might have hesitated to put himself into a position of such prominence. The Doctor, however, had told him that he was

well enough now to return public thanks to Almighty God for the mercy that had been vouchsafed him, and would not have allowed him to stay away.

There was hardly a man, woman or child of the little community who did not come to the chapel that evening. Its narrow benches were full. The singing of hymns, usually with some metaphor drawn from the sea or the soil, and man's work thereon, or from warfare, in which his religious life should be spent, was undertaken very heartily. The old farmer conducted the service up to the time for the sermon, and Pippin had time to look around him at the people who were gathered here.

He knew many of them by this time, for he had received visits during his convalescence, sitting in the tiny parlour of the cottage, or outside in sight of the sea. And the rest he knew about, for the old woman and the young girl had both plied him with tales of their neighbours, and the doctor had talked to him about his flock too. It was natural to think of them as his flock as well as his patients, in this place, and he had undoubtedly stamped his impression upon them. He was their superior in many ways, but he was also their equal. He was friend to all of them, and lived his life among them of free choice.

There were a few farmers and their families, and the rest were humble folk who drew their living either from the fields or from the sea. He had welded them all into a unity, which was somehow apparent even to Pippin as he looked around him. They were one large family into the bosom of which he had been taken, and his heart warmed towards them.

It was a still, cloudless evening, and the sun sending

its level rays through the high window behind the pulpit made a mild halo of the doctor's grey hair as he stood up to preach, while all the crowded congregation settled themselves to listen to him.

His text was: "Yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs," and there was a ripple of anticipation, as his hearers waited for what he would make out of that, and a few broad smiles were to be seen on the faces of those more alert who guessed that Ben was to receive his meed of praise for the rescue he was known to have brought.

So it was. The preacher extolled the love and faithfulness of an animal often held up in the Bible as a type of all that was vile, though he made it clear to those unaware of the fact that the pariah dog of the East was a very different animal from the one that had earned the name of the friend of man in our civilization. Ben—he mentioned him more than once by name—had kept by his master, lying in peril of death, all night long. He had known no better. "It isn't always the cleverest people, you know, that are the most loving." And then at last the love he was full of had bade him do something that it wasn't altogether natural to him to do. Or if they preferred it, it had been put into the dog's limited mind to do what was necessary. He preferred that explanation himself. If it was said that such a thing would be something like a miracle, he still preferred it. If it was said that miracles don't happen nowadays, very well! "You keep your opinion and I'll keep mine."

He returned to the qualities of the dog as they were known to all of his hearers, and told them anecdotes to illustrate his faithfulness, obedience, self-sacrifice and un-

questioning devotion to those whom he recognized as having a right to it.

Then he broke off and gave a vivid picture of a young man in the full tide of life lying all night long helpless and in pain, with death coming to him with the return of morning. Pippin felt rather uncomfortable as he was thus made the hero of a realistic story, not in all points squaring with the facts upon which it was based, and had to receive stares of pleased recognition from the younger children and sidelong looks from their elders. But his discomfort was mixed with gratification. Certainly he had passed through a very interesting adventure, and could not himself have told it half so well. He was more moved by the preacher's account of his perils than he had been at any time by the thought of them since they had come to an end.

This passage broke off too, with a somewhat damping reminder that folly and carelessness often led people into positions in which they couldn't help themselves and had to be helped by others. So far it had only been material to which some moral might be applied, though none had as yet shaped itself which could bring the two strands of the discourse together. But the preacher had kept the attention of his hearers, who had followed him with all their eyes and ears.

"Well then, what has all this talk of dogs, and a young man breaking his leg on the rocks, to do with religion, which we come here to think about, and to try to follow? We all love talking about our dogs at any time, and though we are pleased to see our young friend about again we haven't come here to tell him so. We come

here to worship God, and to learn something more about Him if we can."

The dogs eat of the crumbs. The most debased creatures known to the world at the time those words were spoken have something given to them; still more the much higher animal which the dog is as he is known to us. They have gifts given to them which countless human beings, who really desire the best sort of gifts, never seem to attain to. "Show me the man or woman or child whose love is as unselfish as a dog's, or whose readiness to give service is as great, and I'll show you one of the best and most lovable of God's creatures. And yet those are only the crumbs of God's mercy. Let us think for a moment what the full feast is like."

So he held up before them the Christian virtues, or such of them as most appealed to him, and gave them something of a fresh application which struck home.

Then he turned to Pippin again, and made them smile by his description of what had been given to him as a special titbit, "as it might be one of you fathers putting something from his own plate into the mouth of his child." The child would love its father, wouldn't it? for giving it something that he might have kept to himself. Children are sometimes greedy, and they take the love of their parents as a matter of course. But they do give some return for it. Even to a child the father's love would be more than the dainty it was swallowing. Pippin was exhorted not to swallow his special titbit from the rich feast without thinking of the Father who had given it to him, and making some return. "Don't bolt it down, lad!" said the preacher with immense emphasis.

This personal adjuration, which came just before the ending of the sermon, was less gratifying to Pippin's youthful vanity than the notice he had received earlier, but it made an impression upon him which subdued his self-esteem. The service came to an end, and the congregation, after lingering for a time outside the little chapel, went their several ways home. Pippin hobbled on his crutches through a field of ripening corn, with the sea in front of him, calm and still in the evening sunlight. The soberness of spirit which had come upon him melted into a sense of peace and well-being. He felt happy and clean of mind, which was perhaps the best answer he could have given to the appeal that had been made to him.

For some weeks Pippin had perforce to live a life of idleness, and in the meantime his small stock of money, much depleted by his recent sojourn in the sea-side town, was fast melting away to nothing. The doctor had arranged on his behalf what he was to pay Mrs. Collinson for his bed and board. It was little enough, though in her penury it was a help to her; but he would not be able to pay it for more than a few weeks longer, and however little the doctor should charge him for his unremitting attention he would have nothing with which to pay that.

This began to worry him. Should he write home for money? No. The undertaking had been that if he wanted money above what he had received, he must earn it for himself, and he felt himself bound by it. But how could he earn money without getting about? At last he put his difficulty to the doctor.

"Well," said that friend of his, when he had heard him out, "it would be easy enough for me to forgive you what you owe me; but I have to live, and if I don't take pay-

ment from you for the work I have done for you, I must be a little harder on those whom I might want to let off some of their debt. And of course you must pay the old lady here for as long as you stay with her. If you *can't* earn money for yourself, you will have to apply to your parents for it. That much seems clear."

Pippin agreed to this, though he thought it might have been more sympathetically put. He was inclined to pride himself upon keeping to the strict letter of the understanding with his father, but the doctor seemed to take small interest in that, and asked him no questions about it. "Have you thought of anything you might do while you are laid up?" he asked him.

"The only thing I can think of is to make fishing nets," said Pippin, "Lydia has taught me how to do it, but I have told her that I will help her with the net she is making when she isn't working at it herself."

Net-making was the industry which most of the women and some of the men of this little community worked at in their spare time. It was not very well paid, but the extra money it brought in was welcome to supplement the low rate of wages that prevailed here. With Lydia and her grandmother it provided nearly all the actual money they had to spend. Mrs. Collinson's house and her few acres were her own, but it was all she had.

"That's all very well," said the doctor, not in his most accommodating mood on this morning. "If you were a young gentleman of fortune it would be a graceful thing to throw in that amount of help in addition to what you are paying them, and no doubt Lydia thinks it is a very noble thing of you to do, and is absurdly grateful for it. But I'm afraid you'll have to forego the pleasure of work-

ing for her for nothing, as it is necessary for you to work in order to pay them for what you get from them."

Pippin felt a strong resentment at this way of putting it. There was enough truth in the charge to make it rankle. "I'm quite ready to do that," he said, in the swift offence of youth at age trampling upon its sensibilities. "It is I who suggested it, if you'll remember. But I didn't know that I might not be spoiling their market if I competed with them. In fact I know very little about it, and I came to you for advice."

"Well, you've come to the right quarter," said the doctor, with a quizzical glance at him. "No need to take offence at my plain-speaking. It's my way, and you must put up with it, as all the rest of them do. You won't be competing with anybody, for there's a practically unlimited market and the price is fixed. All you will have to do is to buy your needle and your mesh-pin and your stock of twine and rope. I suppose you have enough money left for that, and if not I shall be glad to lend you what is necessary. You'll have to work long hours at it, so as to do what a machine will do in as many minutes. That's the curse of machine invention. Handicraft is always better, but they won't pay much more for it. Still, you can make your living by this, young man, and a bit over, and I'm glad you first thought of doing it. Lydia won't think any the worse of you, I'll promise you."

This was rather too much in the line of the doctor's evident desires for his young favourite to remove altogether the rub of his previous roughness. Pippin and Lydia were now close friends, but his mind was quite empty of any feeling but that of elder brotherly affection

for her. Even the passion he had so lately felt for the girl of the circus had left him, washed away, as it seemed, by the crisis through which he had passed. He could think of her without pain and without desire; but he thought about her as little as possible, content to have found this quiet resting-place for a time, and not yet in the way of planning anything for the day when he would be ready to leave it. He did not suppose that Lydia's feeling for him was any different from his for her, and the doctor's little promptings and guidings, which were so obvious, though he thought them skilfully wrapped up, were something of an irritation to him. He and Lydia understood one another perfectly, and of course she would not think the worse of him for setting about the breading of nets, as they called it in that country, for his temporary support.

She did not, but commended him for his noble independence of character, since, as he told her, money was his for the asking, if he cared to ask for it, and he need not be plying his needle all day long and making his fingers sore and tarry for the pittance he earned by it. But she thought he ought to write to his parents and tell them about the escape he had had; and he might perhaps like to say that he was happy and comfortable where he was, which could only relieve their minds about him.

But no, he wouldn't do that. She didn't know his father, who had sent him out into the world on an idea of his own. A year would soon pass, and it would be time enough then to hear the tale of all his adventures. His father didn't want letters from him.

But his mother! Didn't she want to hear from him, Lydia asked.

He gave her to understand that his father's word was law in his home. Both his mother and he accepted it when it was given, but it was rare for him to give it against their wishes. When he did so, it was not to be disregarded.

Lydia laughed at that, but not with merriment. "Granny and I don't hang upon the words of any man," she said.

"What about the doctor?" asked Pippin.

"Oh, we like to please him," she said; "and perhaps if a man—" She broke off. She had been going to say that if allegiance was owing to a man it might not be difficult to bow to his will without question. But her thought would not have found precisely that expression, and there were other reasons why she did not give it further utterance. "Is there nobody else at your home, who would like to hear about you before the year is up?" she asked; and Pippin replied that at his home there were only his father and his mother and himself.

It was not then, but a few days later, that she asked him suddenly: "What was the name you called out when I found you lying among the rocks? Who did you think I was?"

He was confused. He very dimly remembered her finding him. Was it possible that he had been thinking of Rosie Schwenck at that moment which but for Lydia would have been very near his last, and had called her name? "I don't know," he said. "I don't remember calling anybody's name."

"I think it was Alice." She was not going to let him off. "It sounded like that. It was just as if you recognized me."

His face cleared. "Alison?" he said. "I might have thought you were Alison, though she is older than you. She is my cousin who lives near us. Did I really call her name?"

Then she wanted to know all about Alison, and particularly her age, and how long they had known each other.

"She is a year younger than I am," Pippin told her. "We have always known each other. She wasn't altogether unlike you when she was your age. She was the last person I saw when I left home."

She wanted to know all about that, and plied him with questions about the childhood and youth they had spent together. He was nothing loth to talk to her about Alison. His home was fair to him now, and all the life he had lived there, in which Alison had played a large part. This was when he had been working at his net-making for some time, and before he had begun to walk without a crutch. It was well to be working for his living, and his mind was at ease on that account. But it meant long hours of labour for small pay, and the days were becoming montonous. It would have been very pleasant to be getting over his accident surrounded by the comforts of his home; and though he loved this little Lydia, for all her goodness, and her unselfish attentions to him, she was no substitute for Alison, with whom he could discuss everything that came into his mind with the certainty of her understanding him, and to whom he had so much to tell now that he did not know how he could put off the telling of it for many months longer.

But this happened not until his leg was nearly strong enough for him to walk unsupported. For a long time he was happy and content to be where he was, and adapted

himself with gratitude and interest to the life into which he had received so kind a welcome.

It was the cottager's life, always near to poverty, in which every penny was counted, and the rule of life was, What can I do without? rather than, What can I get? For there was little to be got from any source beyond what would supply necessities, and the only way to keep a free mind was to reduce those as far as was possible. The advantage of this was that it so increased the number of luxuries to be enjoyed; for the lower the line was drawn the more there was above it. The doctor propounded this theory to him, when he showed himself anxious that Pippin should not put a strain upon the resources of the old woman who was doing all she could for him. He spoke plainly about this. "You wouldn't do it on purpose, I know," he said; "but poor people, as most of us here are, don't and can't live in the way you and I are accustomed to, though certainly I and perhaps you would call our way of living simple enough. You must watch out for what seems necessary to you but isn't to them, and do without it, not letting them know that you miss it. For there's a true pride of poverty as well as a false one. This old lady wouldn't mind going without anything herself, but it would hurt her if she thought you were missing something."

Pippin said that he was careful about this, and admired the courageous way in which the old lady faced her poverty.

"Oh, you needn't pity her," said the doctor, although it was admiration and not pity that Pippin had expressed. "There's a lot of fun to be got out of poverty, if it's not too grinding. It isn't the poor people who get tired

of life. It's the rich people, to whom everything comes so easily that there's no savour in it. The more you can do without the more you enjoy what you get. If you are used to bread and butter and jam every day you don't think it much of a treat. If you can only afford bread and butter, whenever you get jam it *is* a treat. If you can only afford bread, it doubles the treat to have all three sometimes. And if you can never be sure of getting enough bread, the bread itself is a treat when you do get it. Besides, poverty is a better soil for the virtues to grow in than wealth. It won't do you any harm, as long as you stay here, to notice how many of our old friend's virtues grow out of her poverty. You will learn something about life in that way that you may not have an opportunity of learning again."

CHAPTER XXV

PIPPIN WORKS AND GETS TIRED OF IT

For some weeks Pippin lived the life of one of the poorer sort of workers in this place, while the summer came to its full and waned towards the fall. And he was happy in it.

Man is an adaptable creature, and if deprived of something which curtails his powers or opportunities makes good shift without it. The patience and contentment of the blind are well known; a man who has lost a limb is usually not less cheerful than if he had four like his neighbours; and even those who are bedridden, though they may wish for activity, do not wish for it so ardently and continuously as to spoil their relish of what remains to them. The deprivation lessens the desire. The old may wish themselves young again, but they do not wish for the things of youth in their state of age. The sick wish for health, but it will only be when health returns to them that they will feel again the zest for doing which is proper to the state of health. Their desire for the time is chiefly to lie still.

So as long as Pippin was kept to one place, or very near it, by his broken leg, his natural desire for movement was suspended, and he took satisfaction in what would have only irked him if he had been all himself. It was pleasant to wake in his tiny room under the eaves, to see the light of the sun, hear the murmur of the sea as a sort of ground-bass to the homely noises of the birds and animals

about the cottage farm, and to smell the clean scents of the unpolluted country. All these things, to which he was accustomed in his own home, meant more to him here, since his mind was not occupied immediately upon waking with all the activities that had been before him there. There was one chief thing before him in the day to which he was now awaking—the long hours to be spent in the increasing of his net; and somehow he looked forward to that task in spite of its monotony.

He became very skilful at it. After a short time he could net a row faster than Lydia. He would time himself, and make calculations of how many rows he could do in an hour, in a day, in a week, and how much he could earn in a given time. This gave the almost mechanical work an added interest, the hours he spent at it slipped by, and, by increasing his rate over the reasonable amount he had bound himself to do, he gained periods of leisure in which he did nothing, or read a book. These periods became sweet to him, thrown into relief by the work on either side of them, and because he had earned them. And the work of his hands left his mind free, also his ears and his tongue, if there was any one upon whom to practise them. If he had been free to go about, the long hours he spent over it would have been irksome to him, but in his enforced state of quiescence they had exactly the opposite effect; idleness would have been wearisome, in a way that no work is.

It was very fine nearly the whole time he stayed at this place. There were few days in which he could not do his work out of doors. Breakfast was always early in the cottage, for there was so much to do in the day. It was also very frugal, and in spite of his inactivity Pippin

was often ravenously hungry before the mid-day dinner, at which there was always enough for his healthy appetite. Mrs. Collinson saw to that, and pressed him to eat as much as he could, but he was often ashamed of the extent to which he obeyed her. Appetite became a thing not to be indulged whenever it made itself felt, and there was some satisfaction in curbing it. That was one lesson he learned.

The morning hours would go by very pleasantly. The sea was always before him as he sat by a bush of tamarisk and a hardy fuchsia that grew under the cottage wall. There was always something to look at in the sea—the fishing boats and the coastal vessels, and sometimes farther out a large steamer. The gulls cried about the cliffs, or floated out over the ocean, or sat rocking on its waves. The cloud shadows and the currents made the surface infinitely varied in colour. There were delicious tones of green in it, and blue and amethyst and dark grape-colour. It was a continual solace to the eye as well as an interest to the mind.

Mrs. Collinson seldom rested from her labours during the morning. She was about the house or the garden or the little farmyard all the time, as busy as possible. Old people used to a life of active work seem to acquire a latent store of energy which drives them to incessant movement. They cannot idle for a few minutes at a time, but must get their rest by relaxing altogether when their tasks are done. Lydia seconded her in all her work, but her young body was not quite inured to unyielding labour, though there was more strength in it than in her grandmother's. The old woman never hurried her to work, and she would often come round the corner of the cottage,

and stand talking to Pippin for a few minutes, or throw herself upon the sun-warmed turf, closely nibbled by the rabbits which abounded in the rough ground between the cottage and the cliff top.

The big break for all three of them came at dinner time, which was at twelve o'clock. The old woman would sit awhile after they had finished, her hands in her lap, quite still, hardly using any of the muscles in her body. She would talk about the interests of her daily life of work, about her neighbours, sometimes about incidents of her earlier life. There was plenty to talk about. She read no newspaper, and had curious notions of the world outside the few square miles of it which her eyes had seen, but was interested in everything she heard, and could make shrewd comments on it. There was no tedium in her life, which was so full of multifarious duties that the problem was not to find occupation for the hours, but hours for the occupation. And yet there was always time to be found if it was a question of help to her neighbours, in sickness or in any kind of trouble. Sunday was her only day of rest. There was rather more to be done in it of necessity than would have made a working day for most women; but by contrast it was a day of leisure, and for a few hours in the afternoon and evening she did give herself a rest, sitting in her high-backed wooden chair by the close-shut window with the prided pot-plants arranged along the sill, dressed in her plain black gown, with a little black silk apron instead of the white one which she was never without at other times, her Sunday cap on her head, her old lined face set in a cast of tranquillity. She read her Bible, which was the only print she ever read, until she nodded under the unwonted influence of the hour, woke

up, read a little more, and nodded again. Her figure, on those hot still Sunday afternoons, always stood afterwards for Pippin as the very type and emblem of peace. The contrast between that and her usual state of industry was as if a continuous loud noise which had been going on all the week and to which the ear had accustomed itself, should cease and give place to silence for the space of two hours. It was almost oppressive. The cheerful clatter of teacups which brought it to an end was a welcome relief. When they had been cleared away, and a few evening duties performed, the relaxation took on another more sociable aspect. A vast tract of leisure opened itself out before it was time to go to the chapel, a burst of activity between the service and supper, and another period of leisure until it was time to go to bed, and leisure was at an end altogether for six days to come.

Pippin thought of many things during the hours in which he worked at his nets that he would not have thought of if he had been leading a more active life, and he thought sometimes about old Mrs. Collinson, who showed affection for him. She had so little, and yet she had so much. It would have been difficult to imagine anybody with a life that more filled itself out in every moment. Its apparent sameness did away with monotony, for the minute changes of occupation varied it in texture, and any little change that came into it had the same effect as a big change in a life of wider range. He saw hers as an enviable state for one drawing near to the end of life, but not yet disabled for its struggles. And he thought that what was good for her was good for Lydia.

Lydia was being trained to the life of labour and endurance which the old woman had battled through, to an

old age of mental if not bodily tranquillity. But there was a long road before her, in which her training might be severely tested. She had not yet been tried by its troubles and difficulties, which are different for everybody, and cannot be foreseen, or guarded against, except by building up fortitude with which to meet them as they come. In his satisfaction with a transient state of life not natural to his youth or circumstances, he saw her as fortunate in the beginnings of her life, spared the discontent that might have attended a better endowed condition, and with nothing lacking at present that she need desire. But what he found unexpectedly satisfactory in his present mode of life would not satisfy him for long; he was only experimenting with this strenuous work and its modest reward; there was another kind of life awaiting him. There was none awaiting Lydia, so it was all the more important that she should see the advantages of her appointed lot. He was inclined to be didactic with her about it, for he was very pleased with himself for taking up this life of toil, and finding it a good life. It made a philosopher of him before his time, and he wanted to pass on the great lessons he had learned, to somebody who could profit by them.

Lydia would sit by his side on the grass and listen to him. She thought him very wise—wonderfully so for one of his years—and was glad to know that he was not too much burdened by the necessity of working hard for his living. But she was not so quick in applying his predications to herself as he could have wished.

"Oh, I know that you have to work, and work very hard if you are poor," she said. "You ought not to mind, especially if you are working for somebody you love, as I

love Granny. I shouldn't be happy if I were idle when there was work to be done; but sometimes I wish I could have some more holidays. Does your cousin Alison work hard?"

She was very interested in his cousin, Alison, and asked him many questions about her, which he was usually pleased to answer. But Alison was not a case in point just now.

"She has a good deal to do in her home," he said, "and is always diligent and cheerful about doing it. So are you, I know. You are very much like her in that way. But that isn't what I meant exactly."

He did not tell her what he did mean exactly, which was that he had cast her in his mind for a state of life in which there would be more work than was necessary for Alison to do. You cannot always say what you mean when you are preaching to others for their good, from a position superior to theirs. "I am thinking of your grandmother," he said. "She works very hard, and yet she is happy in her life."

Lydia sighed. "I wish she didn't have to work quite so hard," she said. "She is getting old, but she must go on as long as she can, so that she will have enough when she can't work any longer. But when she gets past it I shall be able to work for her, so I often tell her not to worry. She has always been very good to me, and some day I shall be able to do something for her in return."

Pippin had not enough taken into account the shadow that lies over the work of the poor, where it suffices for little more than the needs of the moment, and provision for a future in which the power to work is failing, or has failed altogether, is hard to make. His self-satisfaction

in his recent discovery was a little pricked. But his mind was generous underneath its thin crust of youthful self-sufficiency. It adjusted itself to Lydia's outlook upon work, which was different from that which he had been expounding, though not perhaps less commendable. "It makes everything better worth doing if you do it for love of somebody else," he said, and Lydia liked this speech better than any he had made on the subject, and admired him for making it.

The weeks went by. The time came when Pippin could discard his crutch, and walk about with only his stout stick for support, though slowly and for short distances at first. Ben, who had resigned himself to his inertion, spending long hours asleep by his side, and only leaving him when he was impelled to obey the call of his nature for action, showed himself overjoyed at this revival of movement on his master's part. He covered twenty miles for Pippin's one, but constantly came back to him as he walked slowly along the road to express his pleasure at this new discovery of his, that to set yourself in motion was so much better than to sit for hours with one leg stretched in front of you. Legs were meant to move about with. Now wouldn't he just try for once to move it at a faster pace? He was sure to enjoy it. Oh, very well! if that crawl was all he felt inclined for, perhaps he wouldn't object to his leaving him again for a good stretch. "See that sheep looking at us over there? Watch me bustle her up."

When the time came for him to walk, Pippin lost some of his interest in the work, the steady pursuit of which had so set him up with himself. As long as he could do no more than a few yards to and fro he kept to his appointed

hours of exercise, which he had taken hitherto with his crutch. But when he could go faster, it seemed advisable for his health's sake to do so, and to take more time for it. By now he had money in hand again, but not yet so much as he had decided to take away with him when he should be strong enough to renew his journeyings. He must not falter in that decision. He had been more content to stay and work in this place than he could have anticipated, but he did not want to engage himself for another period of work for some time to come. He must have enough at least to carry him to the great city, and to enjoy its sights and pleasures for a time before settling to work again.

But his hours of work steadily decreased. It was delightful to find his strength coming back to him again, and there was so much that he had been hearing about which he wanted to see. He had come to know many of the people whose social centre was in this hamlet. There was this man's stock to be seen, that man's house or garden or orchard. And all of them made him welcome in their homes; it would have been ungracious to refuse their hospitality. And there was the little group of fishermen, who lived about an inlet that had been just beyond his reach until he could walk without his crutch. When he once got over there he found it so interesting that he must go often; and as the legs are called upon for less exertion in a boat than upon dry land he was able to take part in the fascinating pursuit of sea-fishing before he could use them much for other purposes. The fishing was often done at night, and then he would sleep on in the morning. Mrs. Collinson and Lydia had been sometimes up for hours by the time he settled himself to his net.

But the old woman would never consent to wake him. It was good for young people to sleep, she said, and when there was no work that they need do let them sleep as long as they liked. She could never be brought to take Pippin's net-making very seriously.

Nor apparently did the doctor. Pippin would often spend an hour with him in the evening in his untidy but comfortable room, which smelt of tobacco and a little of medicaments. He had been rather afraid of him at first, for in spite of the unceasing attention he had paid him over his mishap the doctor had seemed to lose no opportunity of making him small in his own eyes. But Pippin was at heart a modest youth, and had lately discovered a few things in himself that wanted altering; and he knew somehow that the doctor was fond of him. Moreover he was not so constituted as to sit meekly under rebuke and then go away and bear resentment. He held his own with the doctor, and they got on very well together.

"I should think you must have made enough money for the present," said the doctor, when Pippin half apologized for taking so much time from his work. "You have stuck to it well enough while you couldn't do anything else, and I am sure you have given us all a lesson. But if you have left home, as you tell me, for the sake of seeing all the life you can, you'll see more of it by going about among your neighbours here than by sitting still. Besides, you ought to exercise your leg, and get your muscles stronger by degrees."

So Pippin felt himself absolved, though he could not disguise from himself that he was not carrying out his original intention. But he forgave himself that. It did

not seem so necessary now to preach the gospel of work in this place, and to show a shining example of his precepts.

Very soon after he began to get about again the idea of continuing his journey came to him. He had not given it much thought since his accident. He was well enough off where he was for the present, and could not have moved for some time if he had wanted to. But with returning strength came the desire to move on, and it was not long before he decided upon the time for his departure. When he had once done that he wanted the day hastened. He was restless now. He had stayed for too long in one place. It would be good to be on the road again.

He took supper with the doctor on the last evening, and they talked together very amicably afterwards. The doctor must have seen that a close tie between him and the child he loved was not to be hoped for, and had given up trying to influence him in that direction. On this last evening he showed nothing but liking for him, mixed with no disapproval.

"I don't suppose we shall ever meet again," he said. "We live at opposite ends of the country, and we are not of the sort of people who are always running about it. But I shan't forget you, and there are many of the friends you have made here of whom the same may he said. I hope that will always be a pleasant recollection to you. When you have once got to know people you never quite lose them, even people you never see again. They make a mark on your life."

They were standing under the porch of the doctor's house underneath a sky of bright stars. "The time I

have spent here has made a mark on mine," Pippin spoke up. "You have taught me a good deal, for one."

The doctor blew his nose. "I talk a great deal," he said drily. "It would be a pity if some one didn't learn something from it all." Then he wrung Pippin's hand very warmly, and went indoors.

Pippin walked home, with Ben at his heels, and walked slowly, for he was suddenly regretful to be leaving this place which had been his home now for many weeks back. He had formed ties in it, which he was upon the point of breaking. The life in it would go on, though he would not be there to mix with it. In the stillness of the night the place itself seemed to possess a personality and an abiding life of its own. It was a solacing thought that he would leave memories behind him, as well as take them away with him. For some years at least he would count for something here in the thoughts of those he was to leave.

The cottage was dark as he came to it. He went on to the cliff-top and looked over the sea, and down towards the rocks where he had lain in suffering; but that was now so long ago and he had become so completely restored that he hardly seemed to have been the same person.

It was what had happened since that aroused his emotions—the serenity of convalescence, the peace of the long quiet summer days, his participation in the simple life of the cottage, the companionships, the community of pursuits. Yet he had been happy here, certainly as happy as at any time since he had left his home. Yet there had been nothing to excite him to pleasure, for some time he had been in pain and discomfort, and for some

time longer he had been at work, more arduously than at any time in his life. For the moment, at least, he would rather have stayed here than gone away.

But he arose very early the next morning with pleasurable anticipations of his journey, and whistled to himself as he made his preparations in the little whitewashed room under the eaves that had been his for so long. Early as he was, Mrs. Collinson and Lydia were up before him. Lydia often sang over her work in these early morning hours, as he whistled, but she was not singing this morning. She gave him bright welcome as he clattered down the narrow stairs into the kitchen, and her grandmother did the same, bending over a savoury stew upon the fire; for he was to eat heartily to support him on his journey, and if she was sorry to be losing him she could best express her regret by generous treatment of his last moments.

They came to the door with him and he kissed them both good-bye, the old woman because she had been so kind to him, and the girl for much the same reason. He turned once to look back and wave to them, still standing in the doorway, and when he was out of sight they both went back to the work which had seemed to him so good for them.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GREAT CITY

It was on a dull evening of lowering clouds and a chilly wind that Pippin came to the great city. He had walked all day along on a wide high-road that passed through neither town nor country, and though now he was among streets of houses he was still only on the outskirts. But he was tired and hungry, and in a mood of depression. He would find an inn and rest here for the night. The sun might shine again on the morrow, and his first view of the glories of the city, of which this mean crowded neighbourhood gave small promise, would be taken with happier effect.

But he was beginning to doubt whether the glories of the city were as he had once imagined them. He had seen large towns, travelling with the circus, and upon his steady tramp from the quiet place in which he had said good-bye to the summer, and they had pleased him very much less than the small ones. Nothing that was to be seen in the way of fine buildings, of great shows in shop windows, of the gay and splendid life of the rich, which in any case he must see from the outside, was likely to make up for the sensation of loneliness, which always attended him when he walked among a crowd of people, all strangers to him.

He felt more lonely than ever as he trod the hard pavements on this last evening of his journey, with Ben keeping close to his heels, an unhappy dog if ever there was one,

not understanding at all what these strange legs all about him could mean, but knowing well that no whiff of friendship could be expected from any pair of them. Pippin had taken the light pack from his shoulders, and carried it on his arm, so as to make himself less conspicuous among all the city dwellers. But his unlikeness to them was still so marked that there was hardly one of all those he passed who did not look at him with curiosity; and there were some who jeered at his country look and his worn country clothes. For your town dweller is apt to think of himself as on the pinnacle of civilization, and to find impertinence in those who do not conform to his standards. In his ignorance of the ways of the city, Pippin had an increase of dejection at their taunts, though there were not many of those who uttered them who seemed to have much upon which to pride themselves that was lacking in him. In his rough homespuns he strode along the pavements with the lustihood of youth, health, and practised muscles. Though he was at the end of a long day's tramp, he could still have outwalked any of those who expressed their contempt for him.

Pippin had slept in inns good and bad, large and small, during his last fortnight's walking, sometimes in cottages, and once in a barn. But here there seemed to be nothing that would provide him with a supper and a bed. The inns seemed to have ceased with the closing in on him of the streets. There were only large and resplendent public-houses, and some smaller ones, none of which, however, approached his idea of an inn for rest and refreshment for travellers. Men went in and out of them, and women too, but only to drink, and perhaps to talk. He

walked for a mile between the shops and houses before he could make up his mind to enter one of them.

He chose it because there was a notice up of beds to be let. It was a large elaborately bedecked corner house with lights blazing about its windows; for dusk was coming on now, and an impression of cheerfulness and welcome must be created at the earliest opportunity.

He pushed open a swinging door and found himself in a large brightly lit bar-room, with people sitting on plush-covered benches under the windows, or standing before the bar, drinking, smoking, and for the most part arguing. The air was stale and heavy, in spite of the height of the room, the garish lights seemed dimmed by the haze of smoke. Behind the bar with all its apparatus for the serving of liquors stood a large commanding woman dressed in tightly fitting black with a wonderful pile of braided auburn hair on her head, and a face emboldened to the personation of youth by a lavish application of powder and pigments. She was engaged in high-voiced contest of wit with two flashy-looking men who stood with their glasses on the counter. All of them broke off to stare in amazement at Pippin coming up to them with Ben at his heels, and indeed there was a lull in the general clatter of talk at so unusual an appearance. But it started again almost immediately. Most of those present had seen a country lad before, at some time or another, and their own affairs were more interesting than he was.

Pippin asked the lady at the bar whether he could have supper and a bed. She surveyed him with some haughtiness, though with a not unkindly look in her tired eyes. "I don't know about supper," she said. "We don't serve meals here. I dare say you can have a bed;" and she

called to the landlord, who came out from behind a glass and mahogany screen that divided this large room from a smaller one, in which there was accommodation for topers of exclusive tastes.

The landlord carried a paunch as if it were an ornament, and a double chin as if he preferred it to a single. His hair was plastered into a curve on his forehead, and his eye was mean and shifty. He looked Pippin over with as much condescension as the barmaid had used, but with more suspicion. "I should like to see the colour of your money first," he said.

Pippin took a handful of silver from his pocket, and planted it down on the counter. His impulse was to throw it in the landlord's fat face, but it was as well that he resisted it, for this was all the money that he had left to him.

But the landlord did not know that, and the prodigal display changed his note. "Oh, that's all right," he said half grudgingly, half subserviently. "I can't afford not to be careful where there's so many as look all right outside and it don't go beyond the outside. Come with me, sir."

Pippin took up his money and followed him into the regions behind the bar, Ben pressing on with him, with a revival of curiosity. "That's a nice dog of yours," said the landlord, doubtfully. "But you ought to have him muzzled."

Pippin laughed. "He's as gentle as a kitten," he said.

"That may be, but he wants a muzzle," said the landlord. "He can't sleep in your room, you know, if that's what you want."

"Yes he can," said Pippin, and the landlord said that the charge would be extra.

Pippin did not ask what the charge would be, but expressed himself satisfied with the stuffy little room to which he was introduced. The bed was clean, and he proposed to occupy it for only one night.

The landlord told him where to find an eating-house a few yards farther up the road, and he went there at once, for he was ravenously hungry.

He ate and drank his fill, and a friendly serving-girl provided for Ben's needs as well as his. The charge was less than he had expected, and he hoped that the payment exacted for his night's accommodation would be on the same scale. For he had entered the city with no more than enough for two days of living, or three if he was very careful, and the necessity of finding work was weighing upon him.

But food and drink are solvents of more than bodily discomfort. "Who babbles of the hardships of poverty or of military service after wine?" asked the poet long ago, and although Pippin had drunk no wine with his meal he left it inclined to make the best of things.

The clouds had thinned when he came out of the eating-house; the moon shone in a watery sky, and the keen autumn air freshened even those hemmed-in streets, which seemed bright and inviting, with their meanness transformed by the bright lights and the movements of the crowd into something different from their daylight aspect. It was, after all, rather exciting to be one of the crowd, even though he and Ben were alone in it. He had set foot at last in the great city, and belonged to it for a time, as they did. He had his strong body and his active brain. It would be an adventure to market them, and he did not doubt but what he could earn his living in

this place as well as any other, and enjoy the novelty of it.

He strolled along with the crowd until he was stopped by a young but peremptory policeman, who asked if Ben belonged to him, as he obviously did, and then asked further why he was not wearing a muzzle.

It took Pippin some time to understand that this was an obligation of law at that time and in that place, but by a stroke of luck the young policeman, who at first seemed to hint that only the capital penalty would purge his offence, conjectured from some inflexion in his speech that he came from the same part of the country as himself, and was so pleased to find his surmise true that he incontinently transformed himself from the role of accuser, judge, jury, and executioner, all in one, into that of protector and helper. He uttered harsh rebuke of the crowd that had gathered around them for blocking up the thoroughfare, and said that if they did not instantly disperse there would be some names taken, and trouble would come of it. Then he said to Pippin: "You come along with me, and I'll make it all right for you."

He took him to the police station, where by another stroke of luck his superior officer had a muzzle that would just fit Ben, which he was prepared to sell at a price. The price struck Pippin as high, for a second-hand muzzle which did not fit well, in spite of the encomiums passed upon it, and it considerably reduced his remaining stock of silver. But he was glad enough to pay it, for he could not have bought one elsewhere at that time of the evening, and would have had to part with Ben, at least for the night.

The sergeant was friendly enough, told Pippin he had got a bargain, and made much of Ben, whose surprise at

having this indignity thrust upon him by a master whom he had hitherto trusted in everything distressed Pippin not a little. The sergeant unbent so far as to say that in his opinion the law that dictated it was a rotten law, but explained that he was not there to make the laws, which he hinted he could have made better than those who were if it had been left to him, but to see that they were carried out. He was affability itself at the end of the interview, asked Pippin questions about himself, and said he should always be pleased to help him out of a mess if ever he found himself in one. "I think we've fixed you up all right this time," he said. "Poor old Towser, then! Want to get rid of it, do you? But you'll soon get used to it. Now is there anything else I can do for you? I suppose you've got a license for the dog."

Pippin left the police station with a few pence in his pocket, besides the license, without which he might not keep Ben by him as a friend. He went straight back to the hotel, told the landlord what had happened, and asked him to give him some work to do by which he could earn his night's lodging. He had to do this standing in the bar, which was more crowded than it had been earlier in the evening, and the necessity of it was bitter to him.

The landlord was contemptuous, and inclined to be abusive. But Pippin saw no reason why he should support that. "I've told you how it was," he said, "and I've done you no harm. As I had engaged the room I thought the fairest thing was to do what I have done. If you have no work for me to do, say so, and I'll get my bag and go."

The landlord was not melted by this address. "Here's a young gentleman," he announced, waving a dirty hand to his audience, "who comes 'ere—" But he got no

further. The auburn-haired barmaid broke in on him. "Oh, don't make such a to-do about it," she said in her shrill voice. "The boy ain't done no wrong. There's plenty he can do to help me till closing-time, and he can clean out the bar to-morrow morning. If he's out of a job you'd better take him on instead of Bob. He's got one of his lazy fits on, and I ain't going to stay here and do his work as well as my own. I'm sick of Bob, and you too."

"Go it, Jessie," said a frequenter, with his elbow on the bar. "Give it 'im 'ot. He ain't got no friends."

She turned on him furiously. "Here, you get out o' this," she said, seizing his glass and emptying it into the sink beneath the counter. "I've had enough of your sauce, and your ugly face too. Get out of it, I say."

She was obeyed. The man went off grumbling. There were murmurs of sycophantic admiration from the rest. The landlord's face wore a deprecatory look. "There, don't take on, my dear," he said soothingly. "If it's a job the young man wants, why—! Can you use your fists?" he asked Pippin with a grin.

She turned on him again, virago-like. "We ain't going to have none of that neither," she stormed at him. "*I*'ll send Bob about his business, if you ain't got the pluck to do it. Call yourself a man! I don't know why I stay on with you. It ain't for your good lôoks, or for your dirty money either. You was always mean with that."

"Well, why don't you go then?" enquired the landlord in sulky fury. But it was plain that she ruled him, and those who frequented the house too. They were all silent now, enjoying the exhibition of her mastery, but not without a fear that her storming tongue might be turned at any moment upon one of them.

There came into the bar a big man in shirtsleeves and apron. His hair was cut very short, and the bridge of his nose was broken. He was wiping his mouth with the back of his great hand, but the moment he came in he began to make himself inordinately busy, collecting pewter pots from the counter with a clatter of the metal.

"Here, you drop that," she addressed him. "We've had enough of you, slinking off to soak and gossip when things are busiest. You've got the sack, do you hear? Pay him his month," she said to the landlord, "and let him go, now at once."

The big man looked merely surprised. It was evident that he had drunk enough to muddle his brain; also that he stood in some awe of the voluble shrew behind the bar.

"This young man is took on in your place," she said. "If he wastes his time talking and drinking he'll go the same way as you, and in double quick time. So now he knows. Drop them pewters and take yourself off."

The expression of the man's face changed. He glowered at Pippin and began to roll up the sleeves over his powerful arms. The barmaid was at him again with her strident tongue, and the landlord, suddenly authoritative, called out: "Now we'll have no fighting here," but made no motion towards coming from behind the refuge of the bar. None of the spectators showed any disposition to interfere either, and Pippin found himself in a cleared space confronted by a man half as heavy again as he was, and if the signs went for anything a fighter by trade, who was preparing for the exercise of it.

But he was not left quite alone. At the first threatening motion Ben sprang up, bared his teeth and gave a growl such as had never yet come from him. But his in-

stinct was to protect his master, and gave him direction in the way to do it. The man took no notice of the threat; perhaps he did not hear it. He would have attacked the next moment, but Ben sprang at him with all the weight and power of his body, and he went down backwards, unprepared for the assault, while the dog tried to get his teeth into his throat, but was prevented by the strong wires of his muzzle.

It was all over in less than a minute. Pippin dragged Ben off, and quieted him. The man rose to his feet, hardly understanding, as it seemed, what had happened to him, uttering no word but fingering at his neck. The landlord grasped at his authority, now that the bully whom he had feared had been worsted. "Take your money and go," he said. "If you're not out of the place in ten minutes with all that belongs to you I'll have the police in. This young man never spoke to you, and you was going for him to smash him. Everybody here saw it."

He picked up his money and went out, still dazed and puzzled, and the landlord went after him, strong now in his sense of having the law behind him to punish an unprovoked assault if there should be any signs of further trouble.

The barmaid suddenly laughed. "That's good-bye to Bob," she said. "He was never no good to anybody, and it's a good riddance. Give your orders, please; I can't stand here doing nothing. Here, young man, you make yourself useful. Take these pots to the sink behind there and rinse 'em well. You're took on as potman to the 'King William,' and you got me to thank for it."

It may be imagined with what distaste and perplexity

of mind Pippin set himself to his task. It was hardly five minutes since he had entered the house, and here he was apparently a permanent part of its organization. The ugly scene that had just passed disgusted him beyond measure. He felt a loathing for all who had taken part in it or looked on at it, and the mean and vile place in which it had happened. It would be impossible for him to stay on and work here. What had he said that had committed him to it? He hadn't opened his lips since the barmaid had suggested his being taken on, until he had called his dog off the man who had wanted to fight him. What was he to do? Go out into the street with Ben, walk about all night, and get some work to do the next day. That was what he almost made up his mind to; but something urged him to stay and see it through. He had got himself into a mess, and he wouldn't run away from it.

With this decision made he was ready for the landlord, who came to him pleased at having got rid of the formidable Bob with less difficulty than would have seemed possible, and prepared to take quite a different line with his successor.

"He went like a lamb," he said with a satisfied grin. "I kept on threatening him with the police if he didn't go quiet, and we've seen the last of *his* ugly face. Now then, young man, it's a stroke of luck for you that there's his place for you to step into. I'll take you on for a month's trial at wages to be settled when I see how you shape. You can't keep your dog here, but—"

"Then if I can't keep my dog here that settles it," said Pippin. "I've started working for my bed now. I'll finish that, and we'll take ourselves off to-morrow."

It was the barmaid, lending an ear to the conversation, who said that of course he could keep his dog. "It was the dog that got rid of Bob for us—me and the dog between us," she said. "*You'd* never have had the pluck to do it."

So that point was conceded, grudgingly, and Pippin said further: "I never had any idea of doing work of this sort, though I would have done any work for my night's lodging, as I couldn't pay what I had undertaken. I'll stay with you until you can get somebody else; you will pay me by the week, and you will pay me wages that you will settle now. I don't suppose there's anything to do that I can't learn by being told once, and you won't have anything to complain of on that score."

He felt better when he had spoken up like that. The sense of degradation left him. He and Ben had fallen on a queer lot, but they would go through with it together. There was something strengthening in shouldering a burden, and he could lay it down presently without having run away from it.

The landlord met his speech with an alacrity that might have caused him to reflect if he had not been so bewildered by the suddenness with which everything was happening, and immediately offered him a wage that sounded not illiberal. He did this while the barmaid was out of hearing, but Pippin marked his sidelong look at her, and called out to ask if the offer was a fair one. She said no, and it was increased, with an oath. Pippin had bound himself to this uncongenial occupation, for how long he did not know.

It was not until after midnight that he shut himself into his room, tired out with the unaccustomed work he

had been doing after his long day's tramp. He was too tired to think of what had befallen him, or even to feel unhappy about it. Ben, stretched on the floor by the side of his bed, was hardly asleep before he was.

CHAPTER XXVII

ONE TAVERN AND ANOTHER

Pippin stayed in this place for a month. It took him as long as that to find out that the landlord's efforts to provide a substitute for him were a pretence, but when he did he told him that he was going, and went, without further notice, undisturbed by his threat of the police. He had learnt a good deal by that time, not only of the landlord but of the people to whose baser wants he spent his days and part of his nights in attending; and though he did his service willingly, and there were some with whom he had a pleasant word occasionally, in the mass he despised and disliked them. There was a rough kindness about Jessie, the barmaid, which somewhat redeemed her; but her temper was uncertain at the best, and in her glaring coarseness she was so lacking in all he had learnt to respect in womanhood that he had much ado to keep on terms with her. Fortunately she seemed to lose interest in him when he was once installed under her orders. She only came in the evenings, and was kept busy with her work, and with the incessant hard dalliance which she kept up with those who affected admiration of her. She dispensed Pippin from taking part in this dreary play, and once or twice during a lull of custom, when her mood was amiable, she spoke a natural word with him. But these contingencies seldom arrived together, and he knew no more of her at the end of the month than at the beginning, except that she was a widow and had a grown up son,

something like Pippin, she told him, who had given her a good deal of trouble.

He often wondered what had made him bind himself to this occupation on that first agitated evening. It was partly because his youth had inclined him to submit to what was expected of him, partly because in these unfamiliar surroundings of the city he knew not what further misfortune might befall him if he went out into the night without a penny in his pocket. Neither reason seemed strong enough to him now, but he had learnt much since his initiation, and was learning more every day. The learning was a disagreeable process, but there was some satisfaction in showing endurance of a life he hated, and feeling himself growing in strength and resourcefulness all the time. His dislike for the landlord grew steadily. There was nothing in this mean, greedy, shifty man to be respected. Pippin put the whole of his energy into his work, and gave his employer no excuse to hector him. It was a duel between them. The landlord looked for faults, but Pippin would take no blame from him, and presently he desisted, and changed his tone to one of unctuous familiarity; for this was valuable service that he was getting, and he wanted to keep it. But Pippin would have none of his cozening, and pressed him to find another helper and set him free, which he always promised to do and never did.

Sometimes in a moment free for thought Pippin's mind would go back to the happy time he had spent in the cottage on the sunny cliff top, where every face he saw was the face of a friend, where there was hard work and small pay for it, but it was work done under the free sky, and all around was the clean air of the fields and the sea, and

the nights were quiet, with deep healthful sleep in them. How different from this life of the city, with its incessant noise and unrest, with dirt everywhere and the very air tainted; where all work seemed a burden to those whose lives were forced to it, and relief from toil found in the hot rank atmosphere of this drinking-shop, and talk that might at any moment break into quarrelling, and quarrelling into blows.

Part of Pippin's duty was to be on the watch for these disputes, and to turn into the street any one whose inclination towards violence showed signs of mastering him. If he had known this he would not have committed himself to it, but, having done so, he found it not the most odious of his tasks. He could work off some of his disgust at the baser sort of people among whom his days were spent, and whom he was there to serve, and at least by the strength of his arm prove that he was better than they were. The landlord was solicitous for the good name of his house just so far as it would keep him out of trouble, but was too cowardly a creature to be able to keep order among the rougher spirits who frequented it. The barmaid with her shrill tongue did more than he did, but it was Pippin who wrought a change in it during the time he was there, not so much because he cared about its good name as from the disgust that was seething in him at all its sordid ways, which found vent in violent action whenever the excuse was given him.

But this relief became less as his prowess became known and wrought its effect. One night he had had a heartening struggle with a bully who was always tempting him to an attack, but stopping short of the provocation that would have brought it on. This time he had given it, and

Pippin had turned him out into the street, and had a set-to with him when he got him there, which had lasted a very short time but given him a good conceit of himself. It was late on the night on which he received his pay, and his momentary self-satisfaction more than the landlord's sycophantic praise of him prevented his giving the notice that would have set him free.

But the next morning he overheard the landlord refuse the application of a man who wanted the place that he was so ready to give up. It was a rough refusal, as this man's would be, when anything was asked of him that it was not to his advantage to concede. "You can clear out of this," it ended, "unless you want to be kicked out. There's a young fellow about the place who can do it and enjoy doing it, and I'm going to keep him at it."

The man went out grumbling. The landlord came into the bar, and blinked when he saw Pippin there. Pippin hated him too much to care about a contest of words with him. "I'm just going up to fetch my things, and then I'm going out of your beastly house," he said.

The landlord began to bluster, but he left him at it. He began again when Pippin came down, but he pushed by him without a word. He went to the yard in which Ben lived a doleful existence during the long hours in which his master was working, and within three minutes of the time that he had discharged himself Pippin was in the street, a free man once more.

It was a dull cold morning, more cheerless in these confined streets than the roughest weather in the open country, But for Pippin, for the first time since he had entered the city, the air seemed fresh and bracing. It was that time of the morning when the workers of this

part of the town were mostly penned up between walls, and distribution of goods was not yet at its height. The streets were not so full as at other times, and Pippin could walk along the broad pavement with something of the same step with which he had set out on one of his day's marches through the country. He felt not less exhilaration than on those happy mornings, and as for Ben, his delight at this glorious and unexpected resumption of the only right way of using the hours of the day was almost too much for him. He jumped about his master, who had come to his senses at last, higher than he had ever jumped before, with barks of uncontrolled rapture, and did not settle down to the close dogging of Pippin's steps, which he had learnt in his painful experience of streets to be the only way not to lose him in the crowd, until they had left the scene of their tribulations far behind them. By that time he had accepted the change, and put the past out of his mind, which is the happy faculty of dogs and other animals, more fortunate than men in being able to take the good as it comes, and for as long as it lasts, with no shadow thrown upon it by the evil.

"How altogether wise and good you are, dear master, in taking up that bundle of yours again, which unless I am much mistaken contains something for both of us to enjoy under a tree or on a grassy bank when the time comes. Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! I do want you to know how pleased I am with this setting out again. We'll never go back to that horrible place—no more, no more, no more. But, I say, can't we do without this beastly cage over my head? I can't get at you to lick your face. You wouldn't like to wear one yourself, you know. Oh,

very well! I won't grumble at it until we get clear of all these tiresome people; then you can take it off. You know best, no doubt. Don't worry about me. I'm as happy as a lark, and ready to follow you anywhere. Lead on!"

Pippin had money in his purse, and his freedom. But the money was not enough to keep him for long, and the freedom would have to be used to find work that would earn him his living until the time came for him to set his face homewards. There was the whole dreary winter to get through before that time came, and he had made up his mind that he would see it out in the city. He had been unfortunate in his first experience, but he knew that he had lighted only upon the unsavoury fringe of it, and it still spelt romance to him, though no longer of the golden stuff of his dreams. His home, and all the life that he had led there, had painted itself in his imagination in ever brighter colours during his late imprisonment. It did not seem possible that he would ever want to leave it again, when he once got back to its happy settled freedom. He was sure that he would never want to come to the city again, or at least not to take part in any of its work, or the life lived by its workers. But there was still something to be gained from it, if it was only the delight that would come to him when he had got through the months of his probation and could take the road homewards. He would not seek work outside the city until the time came for him to leave it for good.

There had been times in which, freed from his distasteful work, he and Ben had gone exploring away from the unlovely quarter in which he lived. There was open ground within reach, almost like the real country, in

which were trees and grass and the wet mud of honest roads instead of greasy pavements. But he had gone more often to the heart of the city, and seen much to interest him.

He had seen the great buildings that were familiar to him in pictures; the palace by the river in which the laws were made that he and all men must obey for the peaceable ordering of the realm, and from which even so small a thing as the muzzling of Ben had proceeded, so anxious were the grave deliberators for the safety of those whose welfare was committed to their charge; the great church in which kings and other illustrious men were buried; famous streets, and well-ordered parks, in which nature was tamed but also encouraged. He had seen a troop of soldiers in all their splendour of scarlet and gold and steel, and admired the fine horses which carried them. This had been a chance encounter, but it had greatly pleased him. And he had wondered at the houses of the rich, the miles and miles of them, and again at the fine equipages which served their pleasure or convenience, though he had been told that the high nobility were for the most part resident on their country estates at this season, and had taken their horses and servants with them.

He had been told this in a little tavern which he had lighted upon in a huddle of narrow streets behind a great thoroughfare of stately buildings. The little streets of little shops and little houses wore a very different aspect from the sordid byways of the quarter from which he had come. They were clean and neat and homely, and their air was one of staid respectability, like the back-regions of some great house, in which servants live in sociable comfort, but must keep themselves and everything about

them tidy, and not intrude their private affairs upon their betters. This retiring little tavern had taken Pippin's fancy, because it was not unlike a country inn, and as unlike as possible to the flaunting tavern from which he had escaped for an hour or two. So he had gone in and asked for a tankard of ale.

The ale that was drawn for him was of a very different quality from that with which he dealt during his working hours. One sip of that had been enough for him, and he had bound himself to touch no strong liquors in that place as long as he stayed there, except in the way of serving them to others.

This was the real nut-brown nectar of the country-side, with a reminder of fragrant hops, September sunshine, and warm-scented oast-houses. It was the good cheer of men who had done their work in the fields under the open sky, and could moisten their tired clay in congenial company, encouraged by it to an enlivening warmth of spirit, and not pushed by heady vapours to a mood of quarrelsomeness and noisy self-assertion. It is the best drink in the world for those who by due exercise of body, whether of work or of play, have adapted themselves to its consumption; and in this matter the poor man has the advantage of the rich man, for there are few times in which his capacity is not equal to his desire, and only a lack of pence prevents his departure from sobriety, except on occasions that it would be churlish to bring up against him. For at such times an honest man, in a glow of goodwill towards his fellow-creatures, is overcome more by the wish to enjoy a condition in which lack of pence is the least of evils than by the grave sin of drunkenness. Besides, this transfusion of grain and fruit and sunshine com-

mands a price far below its merits, and your rich man is apt to undervalue things that cost him little. In choice of food and drink he relies more upon the education of the palate than upon the natural promptings of appetite, and appetite he squanders by a too ready subservience to it. For you must master appetite and not let it master you, if you would keep it in healthy cheerful action; and there are some who say you must take this way with women too, but I am not one of them, and at any rate it has nothing to do with what we are talking about.

The natural potables of other nations are manifestly inferior to this delectable strong and bitter ale, which can be drunk in its perfection in only one country in the world, and that a small one, though glorious, for this among other reasons. There is a beer brewed in other countries which is good to drink, but it induces fat in place of brawn, and its habitual consumers are immoderate with it. They swill their beer, but no man swills strong ale; it is too precious a fluid. A long and deep draught, with a subsequent ecstatic exhalation of the breath and a smacking of the lips, is a different matter, and nature's own way of showing gratitude for a great favour received.

The fermented juice of apples is the common drink in those fair regions where grows this wholesome fruit; but it is lacking in substance, and tends to acidity, of the temper as well as of the bodily organs. There is less of sustenance in it than of provocation, and though men who choose their liquors will not pass it by altogether it has no great following outside the vernacular.

The very potent spirit drawn from malted barley or rye grain, if mellowed by age, is a comfortable and sapid

drink for men of mature age and settled character, but makes a mock of others who meddle with it beyond moderation. In the chief country of its distillation, a deep sagacity and a sense of election elevates those whose native potion it is to a plane upon which they can scorn its perils; but for men of a lighter composition it is no substitute for honest ale, and they will get small good of persisting with it.

Wine, pressed from the grape, in the sunny countries in which these ripen, has a mellowing enlivening influence on those who drink it, but they are not to be compared for solidity either of flesh or of temper to those who drink good ale under a more humid sky.

In all this catalogue of fermented liquors, and especially in the matter of wine, I am not concerned with special delicacies of production, measured off and sold in glass bottles, but with the good native liquors that can be stored and ripened in seasoned wood, which has some affinity with them. And of all of them the homely virtues of bitter ale are best brought out if it is kept in casks of wood and drawn from them for immediate ingestion. These are the drinks that can be drunk with more benefit than bane, and are not the monopoly of the rich. And good ale is the king of them all, and the most fortifying.

Pippin's tankard was filled from a cask that stood under the counter, and set down in front of him headed with the light froth that told of life still animating it; and he drank and was satisfied.

It was drawn for him by a comfortable looking woman, neither young nor old, but inclining to the latter, who then returned to her chair beside a bright fire and went on with her knitting, while she showed that she would not be

averse to a little conversation. Pippin was the only customer, and that part of the room which he had entered would not have held many more. The part in which the hostess sat was considerably larger, though not so large as to take away from the cosiness of the whole. There were chairs and a table in a corner of it, as if for favoured guests, but she did not invite Pippin inside, perhaps because of Ben, for whom, however, she had a word of admiration.

Of course she wanted to know where both of them had come from, and Pippin told her from the country, and what part of it, but not how long it was since he had left his home, or what he had been doing since. He would have been ashamed to tell her what he was doing at that time, and fortunately he had given her an opening which prevented her from pressing him with questions. She had been to the country in which his home lay, to a great house within a few miles of it which he knew well, and the owners of it, though they were far above him in station and his knowledge of them was no more than came from the friendly intercourse of the country-side and the gossip that centres on those who are leaders in it. The hostess had been maid to a lady visiting there, and remembered this out of all the great houses at which she had attended her mistress because she had first met her husband there, also attendant on a visitor.

The husband came in presently. He was a dignified man, rather older than his wife. He listened courteously to her reference to Pippin, and with a shrewd look at him and the dog said that he remembered those parts as well stocked with game, and the gentleman on whom he had been in attendance and for whom he had loaded at the time

they were speaking of had done some very pretty shooting there.

It would have been balm to Pippin to talk about country sport, whether on a horse or with a gun; but hard upon the heels of the host there came into the bar a portly senior in the dress of a coachman, and immediately after him another who could only have been a butler, unless he were a judge or a bishop, which would have been unlikely. These entered at once the parlour behind the bar, and were greeted by host and hostess as if their arrival were expected and welcomed. They were followed by two other men, evidently of the higher ranks of domestic service, and in the stir of greeting and attendance upon their requirements, Pippin drained his tankard and went out, lifting his cap to the hostess, who nodded to him with a smile, and called to him to come and see her again when she was less busy.

It was to this tavern, so different in all respects from the one he had left, and especially in its quiet homeliness, that Pippin was now directing his steps. It was the only place in all the great city in which he had been for a few minutes in contact with self-respecting kindly folk. Perhaps they would take him in there, or, if not, he was sure that the hostess would tell him where to find a lodging. Then he would at once set about finding work, and he had ideas about that too. But the first thing was to secure his resting-place.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PIPPIN LOOKS FOR WORK AND FINDS IT

Pippin was in luck on this his second encounter with circumstance. The hostess, whose name was Mrs. Blunt, had taken a fancy to him, as appeared when he presented himself before her, had hoped that he would come again, and was pleased to see him now that he had come. As for letting him a room, the house was too small for them to make a practice of that, but there was a little room which they seldom used, and if her husband approved he should have it, and should take his meal with them too. They were two people alone together, and although their walk in life provided them with no lack of agreeable company, their friends were mostly of a ripe age, and they would not be sorry to have somebody rather younger about them for a time. How long did Pippin propose to stay in the city? She supposed he had come to see the sights, and she and her husband might perhaps put him in the way of seeing some things that it was not open for everybody to see. She took it that the money he had to spend was not without limit, but she promised him that her charges would be moderate, and if he spent it quickly it would be his fault and not hers.

Pippin told her that he had some money, but must find regular employment, for that had been the bargain with his father when he had allowed him to leave his home for a year to see the world. Well, she said, that was not a bad way of treating a young man. It kept him out of mis-

chief, to which young men with leisure and money to spend were very prone; and it gave them resource and confidence in themselves. She didn't know what sort of work Pippin had it in his mind to do. She supposed that a young man brought up in the kind of home he had told her was his would not care about engaging himself in a public-house. Otherwise he might have had employment there, for she and her husband and a maid did most of what there was to do between them, and they had often talked about getting in a young man to help, but put it off because it was not easy to find one of respectability and good manners.

So here was work offered to him without his having to seek it, and little the good woman who offered it apologetically guessed the work he had just left, or the surroundings, so different from hers, in which it had been done. If she had had any idea of it she could only have been surprised, and perhaps a little offended, at Pippin's passing it by. But his mind revolted at the idea of binding himself to the serving of liquors, even though it were unaccompanied by any grossness. She was right in doubting whether it was work that one brought up as he had been would care to undertake. He had fallen upon it by chance, and would never have thought of it otherwise. He was too relieved at having got back upon his own proper level to be willing to step down from it again.

"I will willingly give you all the help I can," he said, "for I am grateful to you for taking me in in this kind way. But I want to work out of doors, and among horses if I can."

She accepted his refusal as natural; but afterwards he made good his offer of helping her in his spare time, and she frequently expressed surprise at his adroitness;

for he seemed to know exactly what to do without being told. When the time approached some months later for him to leave her he made a clean breast of it, and they laughed together over the small deception he had practised upon her. By that time the sting of his memories had been drawn, and she had become so fond of him that she could only sigh and click her tongue at the thought of his having gone through so dreadful an experience. It was only when he told her that she had more than made it up to him that she allowed herself to be diverted from her commiseration and laughed over his tale.

Her husband made no objection to the arrangement she had come to with Pippin. He seemed to be a little doubtful about it, having the suspicion of his years of the ways of young men when brought into contact with the settled habits of their seniors. But Pippin divined that he would only have to be watchful of his crotchets and he would soon get used to having him about the place, and perhaps come to like it.

This came about in a short time. Mr. Blunt was a man of some stiffness and reserve of manner, encouraged in him, no doubt, by his position in life, in which he had to keep intact his own dignity while waiting on the will of others. For he was still in service, though not tied to it throughout the year. He was butler to a dowager lady, at such times as she settled herself in town, and though he often talked of retiring he was not likely to do so as long as she remained alive and in need of his services.

Pippin lost no time in looking for the work he wanted. He had not told Mrs. Blunt exactly what it was he had

in his mind, but he was full of it, as is the way of a young man with an idea to be put into practice.

This was a time some years before horse-drawn traffic gave place to that actuated by machinery. The public vehicles of the city were lumbering omnibuses, cabs with four wheels and cabs with two. It is hard to believe that there are people, and no longer in childhood, who have never seen the streets full of horses, and free from those gliding petrol-driven carriages, which take you where you want to go at so fast a pace that you have no time to think whether it is worth while going there, and in such a hurry. And out of all the fine sights that they have missed in their lives, one most to be regretted on their behalf is that of the hansom cabs, which made such a brave show in the streets and were so pleasant to ride in, if the horse was a good one and the driver neither too fearful nor too reckless. It is odd, I say, that so late in the era of machinery these spanking cabs should have been accepted as the last word of speed in street traffic, when for longer distances the stage coaches had been ousted by the railroad two generations before. The one is now as much a thing of the past as the other, but at this time the hansoms and the four-wheelers and the horse-drawn omnibuses still held the streets, and it was a hansom that Pippin had the ambition of driving.

He had greatly admired to see them swinging along on their high wheels, with their metal and varnish shining, the likely-looking horses that were often between their shafts, and the cabby seated aloft on his perilous seat, looking as if he thoroughly enjoyed that swaying eminence. There were many degrees of pulchritude in these hansom cabbies, as there were in the cabs they rode and

the horses they drove. The high type was a man of middle age, with a weathered face and a knowing look of good humour. He wore a shining top-hat with a rakish air, a thick fawn-coloured coat with enormous white buttons, dog-skin gloves, and very often a button-hole. Unlike the lilies, he took thought of his appearance, and indeed he wore a handsome aspect, and it was an honour to be driven by him, for he was as well-groomed as any rich man's coachman, with an added spice of dash and mettle about him. The inferior type of cabby, especially those who drove the four-wheelers—though some of these were knowledgeable horsey men—might know no more about the driving of a horse than that if you pulled one rein he went one way and if you pulled the other he went another, and if you pulled both at the same time he stopped until you hit him with the whip, when he went on again. But the archetype did know about horses; his knowledge was proclaimed to all who could recognize the masters of that recondite science. He had affinity with all men who wore tight gaiters on thin shanks slightly bowed, and hard hats atilt, sucked straws, and denied the animal of their devotion the initial letter of his name. His knowledge of individual horses went far beyond those he had seen. Of the equine aristocracy he knew the parentage for generations back, and the temper and turn of speed of those in the eye of his world, and was prepared to back his knowledge with silver and sometimes gold against all who would gainsay it. He would take you anywhere you pleased for a sum in payment, and give you a jovial word of thanks for anything extra, unlike the weedy mechanics who have succeeded him, and pocket your coin in a sour and suspicious silence. But he was in most

accord with you when you hired him to take you out of the town to one of the places where horses raced together. Then he was in his right element. Pleasure and business went most lovingly hand in hand. He was your generous friend from the moment you set out until you parted with him on your return. All his knowledge was at your service. Follow it, and your fortune was made, if you had the pluck to take no more than a reasonable risk. He would make no bargain with you, knowing that he would share in your good fortune if it came about. If it did not, and you returned in dejection, he would encourage you with the certainty of profit on the next occasion; and in either case, if you were a person worthy of his trust in you, you would part with mutual esteem.

He was a brave fellow, and he exists no longer; but his ghost may sometimes be encountered at the wheel of a throbbing engine. Always take a motor-cab driven by an old man rather than a young one. Ten to one he has learnt manners in his youth and prime. For to drive and ride horses is a better schooling than to drive small engines. Treat him generously, remembering that for him the times are evil, however brave a face he may put upon them. He moves faster than ever he did, but the glory of movement has departed. Soon he will go to join the company of those who were long since dispossessed of the road, and are now only a legend, as he will be in a few more years at most.

It was to this company then that Pippin aspired to belong: no very high aspiration perhaps, but not to be condemned in a very young man whose love for horses was in his bones and his knowledge of them beyond his

years. He was cut off from the pursuits natural to his state, and if he had to earn his bread for a time these were the special wares he had to market. Besides, he wanted to see the town, and his opportunities would be far less if he were to confine his work between walls. And he was taken—this was a very youthful trait in him —with that dashing livery of shiny hat, brown gloves, and saucer-buttoned coat. Give him one of those smart new cabs, as well-appointed as any private carriage, and a horse with some blood in him, and he saw himself in a position of credit and lustre, in a calling of which no man in the fraternity of horse-lovers need feel ashamed.

But how to get started in that career!

He went to a cab-rank in a square of large houses, with trees and grass behind railings in the middle of it. The cabmen were mostly sitting in the shelter provided for them, but those at the head of the rank whose turn was about to come were on the pavement, talking and joking with one another. Ben went up and nosed them in a friendly way, as if he recognized in them men not entirely subdued to the unnatural bent of pavement-walkers, and so provided Pippin with an introduction. He was soon invigorating himself with talk of horse and dog, such as he had not enjoyed for weeks past. They had talked horse in the bar of the "King William," but that was a different kind of talk, and those who were readiest at it looked upon the noblest of animals only as a counter in their business of gambling.

Pippin kept his eyes and his ears open, as the business in which these men were engaged proceeded. A whistle would sound from the porch of one of the houses round the square, or a pedestrian would hold up his stick or

umbrella on the pavement. The man whose cab was at the head of the rank would swing himself up to his high seat and drive off. The whole rank would move up one. Cabs would drive up and take their places at the end of the line, and their drivers would climb down, swing their arms for warmth, unbend their legs, and join their fellows. The horses were fed from nosebags, and sometimes a rug was thrown over their quarters. There was a constant adjournment of cabmen, two or three together, to a tavern just round the corner, hiding itself modestly among its stately neighbours and keeping quiet about the business carried on in it. By and by the retirements for liquid refreshment lengthened themselves into sittings for more solid fare. Meals were served, mostly to the cabmen, in this tavern, and Pippin ate his dinner there, in company which had accepted him as a youth of parts and of the right kind of education.

It was then that he broached his desire to join it for a time, and his hopes and expectations were immediately dashed. It was not only that there were more men in search of this kind of employment than there was room for, nor that a close knowledge of all the quarters of the town would have to be shown and proved before authority. He might have got over the one obstacle by persistent application and the other by a diligent study of maps and books. It was his youth that barred him. Was he prepared to swear that he was twenty-one years of age? Nobody would believe him, for he was two years short of it, and looked not a day older than he was. "They don't take on children for this job," was the verdict of one of the less amiable of his new acquaintances. Others laughed at him, more kindly, and said that he

would grow up in time, and drive a cab with the best of them.

It was a very keen disappointment, but there was no getting over it. Later in the afternoon he went back to what was now his home, and confided it to Mrs. Blunt. It was a consolation to have somebody to go to who would take an interest in his hopes and disappointments.

Mrs. Blunt was rather shocked that he should have thought of such a thing. "They're a rough lot," she said, "drinking and swearing and betting. Some of them are gentlemen, who have come down in the world, and they are the worst of any. We don't encourage them to come here, and I am glad we are not in the neighbourhood of a cab-rank, or we should have to serve them whether we wanted to or no. If it is horses you want to have to do with, why not try to get into a private stable? It's very likely my husband could help you there, or Mr. Grant, who drives her ladyship. There's nothing like respectable private service for a young man who has his living to make, or for a young woman either. You live well, and wear good clothes, and there's consideration shown you if you're willing, and bear yourself respectful; if you get among the right sort, that is; for the people that have risen themselves, sometimes from something no better than their own servants, often don't treat them so well as those that have been used to being served all their lives."

"I shouldn't like that," said Pippin rather shortly, and Mrs. Blunt accepted his rejection of her proposal without offence. It is a curious trait in the better class of servants that while they prove by their own dignity and self-respect that there is nothing derogatory in their call-

ing, they will acquiesce in the disesteem of it by others. Mrs. Blunt did not count Pippin higher in degree than herself or her husband, but he was the son of a man who lived in his own house and farmed his own land. He might serve others, as most of us must, but it did not surprise her that he shrank from putting on a livery and subordinating himself in a special way to his employers.

"Well," she said, "you would be comfortable enough in good service, but I suppose comfort isn't everything, and all of us like our freedom, especially when we are young. If it is work with horses that you must have, why not try at a riding-master's? You would give lessons to young ladies and such-like, and have your fill of riding, and on good horses too."

Pippin thought he would like this occupation, and Mr. Blunt's friend, the coachman, introduced him to a riding-master, who, he thought, was looking about for somebody who would take on that work.

So he was. But here Pippin's youth again stood in his way. The riding-master said he should have liked to oblige his friend the coachman, and no doubt Pippin was a good man on a horse and wouldn't rattle them to pieces like some he could tell of. But his business lay chiefly among the highest class of young ladies' schools, and he had to be precious particular what kind of man he sent out with them. "They'd never stand a gay young spark like you," he said. "Too dangerous for the susceptible 'earts of the young ladies. I should lose most of my custom, and then I should be out of a job as well as you."

Pippin tried here and tried there, and all the respect-

able gentlemen who foregathered at the tavern and made something of a favourite of him took an interest in his search for work, and were fertile in suggestion but helped him to nothing definite. At last the old coachman again said that he knew somebody who owed him a turn. He could give Pippin a job if he wanted to, and it would be just the very thing for him. He would go and see him the next morning. No, he would go that very evening, before he drove her ladyship out to dinner. He would go that very moment.

He did not disclose what the very thing for him was, and Pippin had some doubts about it until he came in the next morning and said with great good humour that he had settled it. His friend was at the head of the distributing department of a large retail store, or rather of the men and the carts and the horses who carried out the work of distribution. He had promised to give Pippin a trial, on the coachman's recommendation. He would have to work in the stable first of all, but it wouldn't be long before he had a cart to drive. The busy season was coming, and they would soon be putting on more carts and taking on extra men. Pippin would come in just at the right time, and would get one of the driving jobs as soon as anybody; and though some of the extra help would not be wanted after Christmas, if Pippin made good at the job he would be kept on.

So there he was at last, with settled work for as long as he liked to keep it. It was not exactly what he would have preferred, but it was not far off it, and he had learnt by now that regular work was not the easiest thing to get in the city.

His youth, which the coachman had omitted to men-

tion, nearly proved his undoing again. He was told that he could have work in the stable, but it was out of the question to give him a cart to drive. He did not tell the coachman this. He wanted a chance to prove himself, and thought that in time he would get a cart to drive, however much it might seem out of the question now.

It was exhilarating to get to work in these new surroundings, especially as the work had to do with horses, which are much the same in a town as in a country stable. And this was a very up-to-date and well-kept stable. The head of it was a martinet, and no sloth or carelessness escaped his notice. He kept a sharp eye on Pippin, but found nothing to blame in him. He did his work as if he enjoyed it, and there was no doubt that he knew how to do it. Presently the overseer relaxed towards him. He was worth more than the ordinary stable-hand, who often had no skill with horses at all, and wanted constant watching. This man loved horses himself, and was always in and out of the stable, though the care of them devolved not now upon him but upon the head stableman. He had filled this position before he had been promoted. He would talk to Pippin in the intervals between the rushes of work, and their talk was mostly of horse, but also of country life in general, to which he had been brought up, and was inclined to regret that he had ever left. "Though I'm doing better here than I might have done if I'd stayed where I was," he said; "and there's a something about town life that gets hold of you."

When he thought he could safely do so without risking a rebuff, Pippin steered the talk from horse to dog, with the result that Ben was brought to the stable for inspec-

tion, and comported himself so correctly that he was allowed to come regularly thereafter, and spent his days with his master much to the increase of his happiness.

It was not long before Pippin got his cart to drive. "I trust you," said the overseer, now his friend, "not to bring it down on me. I know you'll be all right with the 'orses, and I've nothing to be afraid of there. But if you was to play any pranks while you was out I should get into trouble for putting a boy on to a man's job. Drive careful on these slippery streets; they're not what you're accustomed to. And don't get talking with the maids. They'll be wanting to give you more than a 'thank you,' and 'why was you so late?' But leave all that for after hours. Speak 'em pleasant, and no harm in a 'meet you after dark by the old town pump.' But keep it to that, and don't stay to talk while you're delivering."

CHAPTER XXIX

PIPPIN SEES IT THROUGH

Pippin enjoyed his work during the first weeks. He had good horses to drive, and there was some interest in driving in those crowded streets, also in finding his way about the endless labyrinth of them. He had to deliver parcels, mostly to private houses, and there was variety, both in the houses and in the manner of his reception. He had a regular quarter to cover, and by and by he began to know certain of the houses, in some of which his advent caused a slight flutter, as his patron had foreseen. He was different from the ordinary run of the men who did the work that he was doing, and Ben, who always accompanied him, became known and also aroused interest. It was not only the maids, who usually took in his parcels, who would have liked a few minutes gossip with him, but some of the mistresses too.

There was one house at which he called frequently where the children were on the lookout for him, and would come tumbling out to make a fuss of Ben, who had transformed himself from a country into a town dog, would run half under the cart as cleverly as any trained Dalmatian, and made no more of the dangers of the streets than if they had been country lanes with but rare traffic on them. Pippin would willingly have tarried for a word with these children, for there had been a lack of contact with youth in his life for some time past, and he spent his days with people much older than himself.

But at his first driving round, with Christmas fast approaching, there was such a press that he could not afford to lose a minute anywhere, and indeed he worked for much longer hours than the normal, but received extra pay for the extra work.

After he had been driving for about a fortnight, and felt himself an established part of the machine, the overseer accosted him with a grin and said: "I've been hauled over the coals about you. What was I thinking of to put a kid of your age on to a responsible job like this? And to trust you with the best 'orses, and a valuable dawg!"

He seemed to be in a particular good humour, and Pippin gathered that the rebuke had not been serious, but was a little alarmed all the same.

"Won't stop a moment to make yourself agreeable to the young ladies, eh? Where was you brought up? Oughter be ashamed of yourself, you ought."

Then Pippin heard that the father of the children who had wanted to talk to him and Ben was a high official of the Stores, and had been making enquiries about him. How he had blessed himself for having resisted the temptation to linger, which he might well have done in a time of less pressure. If he had he would certainly have been dismissed, not so much for that fault as for the fault of his youth.

"You're a valuable servant to the Company," said his friend. "An eye is going to be kept on you. You'll be put in my place, I shouldn't wonder, when you grow up. But it was wrong of me to give you the job all the same. I'm forgiven this time, but I'm not to do such a thing again."

Pippin had an interview with the official, who handed

out certain special Christmas boxes himself. He was a stiff-mannered short-spoken man. He gave Pippin a present of money, handsome enough considering the short time he had been in the employ of the Company, and said he would not have received one at all in the ordinary way. Then he asked him a few questions about himself, and offered him a place in his private stable, at an increase of wages. Pippin began to explain that he was going back to his home in a few months, but he cut him short. Did he want the place or didn't he? Pippin said that he did not, and was curtly dismissed. No further marks of favour were shown him, but he was kept on in his place, which was all he wanted. There seemed to be pitfalls everywhere for a young man seeking to earn his living in the city. He was glad to have escaped them so far in this employment, though it had been as much by good fortune as by his own efforts; but he was careful afterwards to keep his duties and his inclinations separate. The official's family went away before Christmas, and afterwards he served another district, and did not see them again. His encounter with them was the nearest he came to making any friends upon his rounds.

The hard work immediately preceding Christmas, which had risen in a crescendo to a terrific burst of activity up to the very last day, was succeeded by a lull so complete that Pippin could hardly believe he was living in the same world.

On Christmas Day he longed for his home more than at any time since he had left it. It had always been the scene of family gatherings, with tremendous feastings and jollities kept up from daylight to dark and far beyond it. His father was at the head of a tribe of relations many

of whom gathered in the ancient spacious house to make festivity, both in honour of the season and for the keeping up of family ties. Pippin himself was nearly a generation behind the cousins who came there with their children. In Alison and him the second and third generations met. The rest were either older or younger, and they two had always been a little apart together. He thought constantly of Alison on this first Christmas which he had not spent in her company. They would have met in church, walked home together across the snowy fields, sat next to each other at the table in the great kitchen which was always used for these gatherings, and during the feasting and the present-giving and the games, as well as in the quieter intervals of the heaped-up festivities, it was she would have counted for most with him, as he thought now that he would have counted with her. His heart went out to her with longing, and he knew that she would be missing him too, at every moment.

Snow had fallen in the town, but it was not the glistening white covering to the sleeping earth that it was in the country. The sun shone palely on the slushy streets, no more than a reminder of the winter sunshine of a country Christmas. There was no air of festivity out of doors, but only the Sunday morning trickle of traffic, fuller towards church time. Pippin went to church, to the great cathedral, where the music gloriously celebrated the joyous festival. This service was something to have seen and heard, but he was wishing himself all the time in the little ancient church between Alison's home and his, with its decoration of holly and box and yew, and no music but the voices of the villagers indifferently accompanied on a tiny organ.

There was nothing to complain of in Mrs. Blunt's Christmas dinner, at which their friend the coachman, who was a hardy bachelor, made a fourth. All three of the elderly people were pleased to have Pippin there to brighten up the occasion, and he exerted himself to seasonable merriment; but how he missed the crowded table of his home with all its talk and laughter! After dinner they sat over their port and walnuts, with the paper caps from the crackers that Mrs. Blunt had thoughtfully provided on their heads, and were comfortable and friendly. They put Pippin in the front of their celebration, and showed more than a mere liking for him. But his heart was heavier at this time than at others, and he was glad when a disposition to seek slumber on the part of his elders set him free for a walk with Ben in the chilly light of the afternoon.

In the evening Mr. Blunt left them, to attend on her ladyship's dinner, and Pippin went to church again with Mrs. Blunt, who had been too busy to go in the morning and showed that she would like his company. They came back to a light supper, and Pippin went up to bed about the time that they would all be gathering round the hearth at his home, to mull wine, roast chestnuts, and vie with one another in the telling of ghost stories told so often that they had lost their power to thrill, except to an emotion of sociability.

After Christmas Pippin never lost the longing to be home again. There were things of interest still to be seen, and various amusements, denied to country dwellers, with which he could fill up his spare time; but the chief part of his days was taken up by his employment, which suited him well enough for the earning of his living, as long as he

had to earn it, but, since he was to leave it presently, carried with it no expectation of progress, which is the salt of all work, whether of the brain or the hands. There were little changes in his life: it was never quite the same at the end of the month as at the beginning. This or that person with whom he came in contact affected his attitude towards the world around him. He came to know young people here and there and to like some of them. If he had been going to settle down to a life in the city he would have been in the way of warming it with companionships, some of which would have developed into friendships. Now and then, on Sundays, or at other times when he was not working, he had enjoyment of something that coloured his life. It was not all monotony, but he was not anchored to it, and as the weeks went by and the time of his freedom came nearer, it became increasingly irksome to have his days filled with this too familiar round. He had fixed the date upon which he would put it all behind him and set his face towards his much desired home. It seemed good to him to plan for his arrival there on the very day of the year on which he had left it. He would take his pack on his back, whistle to Ben, and walk through the country again, in which the spring, of whose coming the town seemed unaware long after a thousand signs would have heralded it in the country, would be in full riot. He made innumerable calculations of the day on which he must set forth, and the ground he must cover, and after he had finally fixed it advanced it by a week, he was so eager to be on the road.

During his last month his approaching departure was seldom out of his mind, and during the last week he was making his reckonings all the time: only so many hours

more to be driving about, only so many more parcels to deliver, this house or this street seen for the last time.

But when he discharged himself from his occupation at last, and was free to go where he liked, with money in his pocket and a good suit of clothes on his back, he lingered for three days more. It was either that or dawdling on the road, if he kept to his plan of arrival; and he would not want to dawdle when once his face was set homewards.

The town had suddenly become attractive to him. There were mild days full of sunshine, and now it had taken the spring to its bosom, in its own way, which was different from the way of the country, but beguiling. The trees in the squares showed no sign of leafage, there was nowhere in which the shy tokens of the advancing year could be looked for. But the flowers were coming in profusion—in far more profusion than in the country, where they are left to take their own time about it. The baskets of the flower-sellers were heaped with treasures of colour and scent, masses of bloom were carried about in barrows and hawked from door to door. Pippin himself had to carry pots of flowering plants and great sheaves of blossom, all very carefully protected, among his other merchandise. Some of the window-boxes of the houses, empty during the winter, or showing dull little evergreen shrubs, bloomed in a night with gay hyacinths and daffodils. Gorgeous beds of spring-flowering bulbs could be seen through the railings of the parks. An army of labour was employed. You passed by them one day and it was winter; a few days afterwards it was bright spring.

The town was taken with the desire for cleanliness and freshening itself up generally. The painters had come out of their winter seclusion and were at work on the house-

fronts in every quarter. In their white overalls they looked summery, and the very smell of paint brought with it the same sense of spring as the scent of flowers.

There were gayer colours in the shops; on fine days the women's hats were more flowery, and their clothes lighter in colour as well as texture. Some of the drivers of hansom cabs, admired of Pippin, sported their grey top-hats; the coats of their horses began to glisten.

There was no doubt that the spring had come, even when the sun went in, and the east wind scurried through the streets. There would be set-backs yet before it was safe to trust it for genial warmth, but every day would bring it nearer to its full, and the town was all preparing for that time, and making the most of the brief spells in which it seemed already to have arrived. Pippin found it a pleasant enough place during those last few days, in which he was at leisure. He would have carried away a very different impression if he had left it at the New Year, as for a short time he had been tempted to do. And it was satisfactory to have seen those months through, without shirking the disagreeables. He would have nothing to regret now in the way he had spent his time, and made use of his opportunities. He was conscious of an increase of strength in himself as well as of experience. His mistakes had helped him to that end as well as his successes, and the dull times perhaps more than those which he remembered with pleasure.

Mr. and Mrs. Blunt took leave of him with regret. It had not always been easy to subdue his desires and inclinations to the staid order which they liked to have about them. But he had done that, too, and given them willing help at all times.

"I knew I should like you from the first," Mrs. Blunt said to him. "There was a something about your smile and your freckled face that took my fancy the moment you came in, though if I'd known where you'd come from, and where you was going back to, I might not have been so ready with my offer to take you in. My husband said I was a fool to do it without knowing more about you, but I was right and he was wrong, and he has owned up now that it was so. Well, I suppose we shan't see you again. You've been a dear good boy to us, and we shan't forget you."

But Pippin said they must come and see him in his home, and though he should not come again to the city for work, he might later on for play, and it was to them he would come, who had been the best of friends to him.

"You will be welcome enough," said Mrs. Blunt; "but don't come alone when you do come. You've made two old folks love you, who have none of their own to come after them. You'll want the love of somebody closer before many years have gone by, and I should like to see her before I go."

CHAPTER XXX

PIPPIN STARTS FOR HOME AND MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

Pippin let himself out of the silent house very quietly. Town-dwellers do not rise early unless there is necessity for it, and he did not want to disturb the slumbers of his friends, to whom he had bade farewell the night before. Ben, who had shown himself so amenable to training, had been taught not to raise his voice in the house, but he knew what was before him when he saw Pippin fill his pack, and the moment the door was shut behind them gave vent to his ecstasy in a pæan of barks, which resounded in the narrow street, and must have awakened at least half the inhabitants of it.

"It's no good, dear master; I've simply got to give tongue. Nothing has ever happened that pleases me so much as this, for it's the long road this time, I know. You would bark yourself, if you knew how to. If you had told me last night what was in the wind I should hardly have believed you. Let's get out of it. Come along, come along! Hullo, there's a maid cleaning a doorstep! She's up early. I must just go and tell her; and I think I'll have a drink out of her pail. Barking is thirsty work. All right, Mary, no need to make a fuss; I shan't hurt you. That's better. Good-bye! I'm off with my master."

They passed through the region of squares and fine houses, and those that were not quite so fine, crossed the

river, and went through the poorer quarters, where the slatternly beginning of the day was in full progress. It was not until they had reached the suburbs, in which the houses were beginning to get bigger and to have gardens in front of and behind them, that Pippin found a place in which he could breakfast. It was not such a breakfast as he could have got in a country inn, with fresh eggs and butter, and hot sizzling bacon; but that would come later. There was a satisfaction in keeping something for anticipation, which was partly why Pippin had not taken a train out of the city and started his last walk in the country. He wanted to walk out as he had walked in, losing by degrees the evidences of the town, as then they had increased upon him.

It took him the whole of the day to do it. After a time he would come upon little patches of what seemed open land, and then the streets and the houses would close in upon him again. When he had got clear of the suburbs the suburban towns and villages strung themselves along the road, each of them throwing out its own tentacles of rapid building to meet the next, so that it would not be long before they were all swallowed up in the ever advancing tide of brick and slate. When he had passed beyond the farthest limit of the tram-lines, curbstones and lamp-posts still accompanied him; but now there were handsome villas in large gardens, and now and then green meadows or little woods, but all enclosed, and attending upon the amenities of the house to which they belonged. These were pleasant places enough for those who wanted trees and grass and flowers around them, but must be within easy reach of the town. Behind them, no doubt, there was untouched country here and there, with hedge-bordered lanes

running past farms and open fields; but on the main road there were only the walls or the palings of the private grounds. There was no sense of the freedom of the country for miles outside the city. Pippin and Ben had to keep between the parallels of the road; but the road was leading them forward, and sooner or later the influence of the town must depart from it, and the country through which they would walk bring with it that uplifting and calming of the spirit which cannot be enjoyed in towns.

It was in a town that Pippin slept that night. It did not consider itself to belong to the great city, and he was thought to have performed a great feat in walking so far in a day, but also to be rather foolish to have done it, since he could have covered the distance by train in about half an hour. He had walked fewer miles than on many another day of his journeyings, but he could go no farther, or he would not have slept in a town at all. Every muscle of his body ached, and Ben was so tired that he could scarcely be roused to interest by the offer of food. They had become townsmen both, unfitted for exertions that would presently be nothing to them.

It took them some days more to get into the state natural to both of them, and by that time the smiling country was all about them, and the last taint of the town far behind. On they went, up hill and down hill and on level ground, sometimes walking for miles along the highway, sometimes leaving it for paths that took them through fields or through woods or along gliding rivers. Sometimes it was fine, sometimes it rained, but they enjoyed it all, and each night as he lay down to sleep Pippin thought of the miles that he had put behind him and the steadily decreasing distance between him and his home.

He had covered about half the distance when he had an encounter which curiously linked the ending of his walk with its beginning.

He had been walking for some distance by a high stone wall which enclosed a gentleman's park. By and by he came to the gates giving entrance to it. On one side of them was a low-built lodge, with a bright little ordered garden in front of it. On the other there was a building of more importance. It had a high-pointed roof in the French style, with an ornamented window flush with the park wall, and at some height in it. On the stretch of grass between the wall and the road was a huge plane-tree not yet in leaf. The road through the park, which could be seen between the bars of the tall iron gates, led to a handsome house, the many windows of which were gleaming in the afternoon sunshine; and a little farther down the road showed the squat tower of an old church, which seemed to stand within the park itself.

There was something in all this which struck a chord in Pippin's memory, and puzzled him greatly as he walked on. For the road on which he was now walking was many miles from the place where he had turned aside with the circus. He had never seen this place before, and the sense of something vaguely familiar was not what would have been aroused by a picture.

He came to a turn in the road, and saw some way ahead of him an elderly gentleman taking a walk. He was thin and tall, dressed in the well-cut tweeds of a man of quality. He walked slowly, using a stick, more as a support than a plaything.

Ben raced towards him. He could never rid himself of the idea that everybody he met on the road would be

glad to make his acquaintance, if he gave him the opportunity, though he sometimes got a snub for his pains.

He got one now, for the gentleman, startled by his sudden approach, hit at him with his stick, and turned round with an air of annoyance to see who was coming. Ben came back to Pippin to tell him that this was a person devoid of manners, and he had better have as little to do with him as possible.

Pippin was inclined to the same opinion, for a light had sprung up in his mind, and in spite of the change in clothing, and in his gait a lack of his former vigour, he had recognized his old acquaintance, the Gentleman Tramp, from whom he had parted a year before not on the best of terms. He knew now why the pavilion by the lodge-gates, and the great tree, and the church in the park, had struck a chord in his memory. They were what this man had described to him in the home of his childhood, and had made a picture in his mind, which had remained there, though he had not thought of it since.

Then the lifelong vagabond had returned to his home at last! Pippin's curiosity to know how this had come about overcame his dislike for this man, and he determined to make himself known to him, if he should not recognize him.

He had time to observe him as he approached. He was much changed from when Pippin had last seen him. It was not only his clothes that were so different. His beard had been neatly trimmed in his vagabond state, and he was not altered in that respect, except that it was white where before it had only been grey. His face was pale and his eyes sunken, and his whole body seemed to have shrunk, though he held it erect as he waited for Pippin to come

up to him. He was an old man, where only a year before he had been no more than of middle age, and active with it.

He spoke very haughtily when Pippin came within earshot. "I wish you would keep your mongrel dog within bounds, sir," he said. "Let me tell you that if he is caught trespassing off the road he is very likely to be shot by one of my keepers."

"As your spaniel was shot years ago, when you and he trespassed," returned Pippin.

He was annoyed at his manner of address and his calling Ben a mongrel, in his old abusive style, but was immediately sorry that he had spoken in this way, for the man's face went white, and his shrunken body seemed to shrink into itself still further. But he recovered himself immediately, laughed with affected heartiness, and said: "Why, it's my young friend the yokel, and still on the road! Well, this is a meeting indeed, and I wonder that I did not recognize you. But you have gained an air, young man, since we had that pleasant walk together, and I told you my story. I've no wish, by the by, that it shall be brought up again in these parts, where it was never known in its entirety and is now forgotten. If you tell it, as no doubt you will, kindly wait until you get away from this country, and then omit my name, which is highly respected."

"You never told me your name," said Pippin.

"Then I won't tell it you now. But of course it will be easy enough for you to find out what it is, by asking questions."

"I see you still have the same low opinion of your fellowmen," said Pippin. "But your name is nothing to me, and I shall ask no question about you at all."

His face changed, and he even looked a little ashamed of himself. "I remember you now as an honest young man," he said, "and that my honesty was not glaringly apparent when we parted from one another. As for having a low opinion of my fellow-men, it is true that I think very little of them in the mass, but that there are good ones among them I have reason to know."

They were walking on slowly. "I remember your description of your home," Pippin said, "and it seemed familiar to me as I passed it just now, though I couldn't tell why till I saw you. I am glad you have come back to it."

"Yes, I have come back," he said with a sigh. "Would you like to know how I came back, and the reception I got? If so, let us sit on this stile, and I will tell you."

He seated himself on the lower step of a stile which marked a field-path just here, while Pippin threw himself on the grass, not sorry for a rest, and anxious to hear the end of his story.

"It was in the winter that I came back," he said, "in that bitter cold time that you remember just before Christmas. I was feeling it more than I had ever felt rough weather before, and I think I must already have been a trifle light-headed with my illness coming on me; for I had always kept away from this part of the country in all my wanderings, and yet I seemed to be drawn to it. Certainly I was light-headed on that last day, when it snowed and snowed as if it would never leave off, and I went on walking through it without stopping, but never recognized a sign of anything familiar, or knew in the least where I was. And that is curious, because all the time I was saying I must go home and go to bed, and my

mother would look after me. And yet I felt as strong as ever in my life, and must have covered an enormous distance before I collapsed.

"Something in my brain must have been directing my steps without my knowing it, for when I came to the gates of the park which you passed just now I stopped short, though I must have passed many such entrances and gone pounding along the road without turning my head to look at them. At any rate, it seemed quite natural that I should be there, and I suppose I should have rung the bell, which one always had to do in the old days, and gone in; but it was just then that my strength suddenly failed me.

"The next thing I knew, I was lying in the snow, but it seemed to me that I was lying in bed, and my brother was leaning over me. That seemed quite natural too, though it was over forty years since I had seen him, and I called his name.

"That was all I knew at that time, but I learnt afterwards that he had been driving home, and his horse had shied at a man lying half-buried in the snow at the side of the road. A disreputable tramp he was, for all he could tell, but I think he would have taken him in and put him to bed anyhow, for that is the sort of man he is. He knew me when I called his name. He had never forgotten me, he told me afterwards, and had always hoped to see me again.

"He was driving alone. The old lodge-keeper and his wife were superannuated servants who could be trusted not to tell how it was that the eldest son of the house had come home. They put me to bed in the lodge, and it was a long time before I could be moved to the house, for I

was very ill, and should certainly have died in the snow if my brother had not found me. I am not quite myself even now, but I am getting better every day, and with the spring coming on I shall be as strong as ever I was. I have lived a hard and active life, as you know, and I am a younger man than my brother in all that matters, though he has the advantage of me by several years."

This unexpected boast struck Pippin sadly. It seemed to him that this man was not long to enjoy his restoration to his home. The death of the poor rider of the circus had marked Pippin's memory painfully. There were the same signs here, the emaciated face and body, the helpless cough, even the denial towards the end of anything wrong. The end would not be quite yet. He would walk for a little longer in the sun, as he was doing on this fine afternoon, but his walks would soon be over. It was well for him that they had not ended some weeks before.

But this impression passed. He was still so full of vitality, in spite of the weakness of his body, and had already shown that he had not lost all his old habits of speech and behavior. It was not possible, listening to his talk, to think of him as a man nearing his end.

"I had always done my father an injustice in my mind," he went on, in a more sprightly tone. "He was hard upon me, as I told you, and when he cast me adrift he put my brother in my place. He told him that he had done so because I had misbehaved myself, but nothing more, and he allowed him to think that he had treated me with unjustifiable harshness till the day of his death. So you see that I return to the home of my fathers a much-wronged man, and—"

He broke off suddenly and cast a look of some suspicion

at Pippin. "I suppose I can trust you," he said, "not to repeat anything I am telling you, at least until you get away from where it might do me harm."

"I have already told you that you can," said Pippin.

"Well, it is some relief to be able to unburden my mind a little. The part I have to play now is becoming irksome to me, now I am nearly free of my sickness, and ready to take my place in the world again. You may imagine that I shall be very careful to avoid recognition by those who knew me when I was—er—travelling the country, shall we say? But you are rather different. I took a fancy to you the moment I saw you first, when you were in need of a meal, and being flush of money at the time I provided you with one. You listened to my story then, I remember, with a courtesy beyond your years and station in life. Of course I must have told it well, though it is possible that I softened some of the details of it to suit your innocent ears. I must confess I like talking about myself, and keeping nothing back—or very little. You shall be my father confessor, and I will confide to you that the pretence I have to keep up in my brother's house is becoming infernally wearisome to me, and, good and worthy man though he is, I am becoming sick of the sight of him."

"You used to be pretty good at keeping up a pretence," said Pippin. "I should have thought there would be no necessity for it now, and the kindness you have met with might deserve a better return. And it was I who provided you with a meal when we first met, and not you me."

"It may have been so, and if it was, it ill becomes you to remind me of it. But I remember now that you were a

stern moralist, and parted from me in dudgeon because I sat too lightly to your code. Ah, those were good days, after all, when one had the excitement of providing for daily wants by the exercise of wit and adroitness. I have no such pleasures now. I have the best of meat and drink served to me, and I care nothing for it, but hate to sit interminably at table listening to dull chatter about nothing at all, or, if I import some brightness into it by recounting some of my adventures, having to bethink myself all the time of what I said on the last occasion, so as not to contradict myself."

"Then you do tell them of your adventures?"

"I suppose you may call them my adventures, since I go to the trouble of inventing them. It amused me to do so at first, but I went at it too light-heartedly, and it is becoming difficult to keep the thread. My brother believes everything I say, of course. In his eyes at least I am a much injured man, who kept up a brave struggle with a fate that was at last too much for me, when I put on a suit of old clothes, omitted to wash, and came home to die on his doorstep. But unless I am mistaken suspicion is breeding elsewhere. I have nephews and nieces. They do not quite understand me. There is a dulness of spirit in them which is painful to me to contemplate in those who are of the same blood as myself. I am wasted on them. And yet there I am, in a house that ought to have been my own, a pensioner on a man with but a tithe of my ability, and—"

"But with ten times your kindness and goodness," Pippin broke in on him, indignantly. "I wonder you are not ashamed to show yourself in the light you do after the way he has treated you."

"I told you he was a good man," he said, quite unabashed, "and let that be enough. A good man may be a very dull man, and in my experience usually is so. You are not a little dull yourself, and you are always impressing upon me your goodness. One did not meet many good men on the road, and got away from them as soon as possible when one did. But how merry the company was at times, and how I sometimes long to go back to it! When your dog so startled me, I was actually imagining myself manœuvring for a meal, as I believe I did with you on our first meeting. It would taste much better if I could get it in that way than the dinner I shall presently sit down to, in another suit of clothes, for which I shall have the useless labour of changing this one, and waited on by men before whom I shall have to act as if I had never eaten a meal that had not been handed to me. This life is stifling me. I liked it at first, for a change, but it is duller than any life I have lived for years past, and most dull in being so comfortable. I tell you that the only disadvantage of the life I lived for so long was that one never had enough money in one's pocket. With what my brother gives me—with apologies for having to give what should have been mine—I could go my old way like a king. When the weather gets warmer, and I shake off this tiresome cough, which is all that remains of my illness, I shall take the road again. I shall make some polite excuse to get away, and of course I shall come back again when I have had enough of it. My brother has treated me well, as I told you, and I owe him some recompense. How I wish I were coming with you now, instead of going back to my prison! I must be going back now, or they will be sending to look for me. I am supposed to be

something of an invalid still, and I am being cosseted and coddled to death."

A labouring man came along the field-path, and the Gentleman Tramp got up from the stile to make way for him. . . . He touched his hat respectfully, but looked a little surprised at what he saw.

"Well, young man," said the Gentleman Tramp to Pippin, in a carrying voice, "I have heard your story out very patiently, but I can do nothing for you. I have no work that I can give you, and money I will not give you. My advice to you is to get back to the paths of honesty and virtue, and you will arrive at a hale and respected age. You will now go your way and I will go mine."

He went down the road. Ben barked at him, but he did not look back. The labouring man got over another stile on the other side of the road, and throwing a glance at him was moved to touch his hat again, so stately and distinguished was his presence.

CHAPTER XXXI

JOURNEY'S END

It had pleased Pippin to plan to reach home not only on the same day as he had departed but at the same hour. But home, for this purpose, was not his father's house, but that in which his cousin Alison lived, the red-roofed white-walled house on the downs, with the chalk stream running in front of it, at which he had said good-bye to her.

She would hardly expect him at that hour, but he would wait until she came out of the house, and then he would tease her, and say that she had promised to be waiting for him at the end of the year. The end of the year had come an hour ago, and he had kept to his promise, but she had not. The idea of this little play gave him absurd pleasure, and he smiled to himself as he walked up the hill at the top of which he would come in sight of Alison's home.

He had slept that night at the farm at which he had breakfasted on the first morning. There had been no difference anywhere, except that the children showed their year's growth. The lambing season was on again, and the same cares and duties filled the minds of these pastorals. It was a foretaste of his home-coming to be with them.

The same strong clean wind blew over the downs, but he had it at his back as he climbed the hill. The sun was up, and the larks towering high into the sky to greet it. Great spaces were all around him, both of the sky

and of the earth. He thought that in all his journeyings he had seen no fairer country than this of his birth. The love of it had been born in him. It would have been worth while to go away for a year if only for the keen joy of coming back to it.

Ben also seemed pleased with this open country, and raced over the thymy downland turf, covering wide circles while Pippin walked up the hill, but came obediently to heel when called. It was explained to him that to chase wiry moorland sheep who could run nearly as fast as he could was a venial offence, though the chasing of all sheep must be abjured at this time of the year; but sheep in this country were not to be chased at any time, and if he wished to earn the good opinion of those among whom his lot was now to be cast he must learn to behave himself not as an irresponsible puppy but as a wise dog who knew when to let himself go and when to hold himself back.

Ben waved his tail to show that he was in full accord with all that his master was saying. "Perhaps I haven't quite caught the whole of it, but your voice is music to me, and I can tell by the tone of it that you are giving me good advice. You may rely upon me to follow it. And now, if you have quite finished, would you like to see me start that fat old ewe over there? She'll run faster than ever she did with me behind her, and it will do her lamb good to learn to get out of the way. You'd rather I didn't? Very well. You only have to say so. Go on talking to me and I'll stay by you as long as you like."

They came to the top of the hill. There was the house nestling below them, with the bright flowers in the garden,

and the orchard flanking it, and the white road beyond, dipping to the vale and mounting to the hill, every foot of which Pippin knew. It was all most wonderfully the same, and yet different, for he saw it with new eyes. And, oh, how good it was to see it again!

The house was shuttered, except the window of Alison's room, which was wide open; for she liked to be greeted by the sun and the air when she awoke in the morning. It was just the hour when he had come up the road a year before, and seen her standing in the doorway, which now seemed very empty, framing a closed door instead of her figure. Perhaps after all, he would not wait for the hour of her rising, which would bring others out of their beds too, to come about him with their welcome. He would creep up the garden path and throw little pebbles into her window, and she would know it was he who was there when they woke her, for he had roused her in that way before.

But for a few minutes he would wait, and take it all in—the familiar scene so full of content—and think how wonderful it was to have it before his eyes again.

He sat down on the grass against the wall of loose stones that ran alongside the road, and pulled Ben to him, who panted and lolled his dripping tongue and looked about him wondering when they were going on again.

He had hardly settled himself when the door of the house opened, and there was Alison!

She looked up the road, shading her eyes with her hand against the sun, which was not far above the crest of the hill, and shone straight into them. She did not see Pippin against the wall, and he would have sat there for a moment before he showed himself, because emotion

had surged up in him at her appearance, and he wanted to look at this new Alison, who wore the body of the old one. But Ben barked a greeting, and ran off to see whether this girl who had just come out was friendly with dogs. Pippin got up from the grass, and went down the hill towards her.

She met him at the gate of the garden. She had not hurried her steps, but she caught her breath a little as she came up to him, and a light sprang into her eyes as she met his. Neither of them spoke until they had clasped hands and kissed each other. A kiss had always been their cousinly greeting, but Pippin had sometimes pretermitted it since they had been grown up. That came to his mind now, and he wondered at himself for having neglected his privileges, but felt a keen joy in their resumption.

It was Ben who brought them to speech. "If you love this girl, dear master, so do I. As you are slow about introducing me to her, I'll save time by making a fuss of her myself. She's just the sort I like, and I'm sure we shall get on well together."

Then there was laughter and a flood of words. They went into the orchard, and sat on a bench under an apple-tree. They had parted by the bridge, in full view of the windows of the house, but now they wanted to be alone together.

Pippin told her of the plan he had made to arouse her from sleep. "And then you came," he said. "I could hardly believe my eyes. Did you expect me, at this hour?"

"I don't know," she said. "Somehow I— But, yes, dear Pippin, I felt that *something* must happen this morning, and I couldn't lie in bed. How, how glad I am to

have you back! But I mustn't keep you long. They are expecting you at home. Your father said you would come to-day."

He asked after his father and mother. "But they won't expect me yet awhile," he said, wondering how he was ever to leave her, even to see his home and his parents.

The full tale of his adventures could not be told at this time, but he gave her an outline, to be filled up in countless talks later. It began with the finding of Ben, and that led to his accident, and the rescue that Ben had brought about.

Ben had forgotten all about that long ago, but was pleased to be talked about, and to receive caresses from Alison as well as from his master. "Oh, I've looked after him for you. But you talk to him now while I go to sleep. Rouse me if anything happens to frighten either of you."

Alison said that Pippin ought to have written home at that time, and he told her that that was what Lydia had said, and more about Lydia and her grandmother, and the doctor. Alison added them all to her list of friends, and said she must hear much more about them later.

Pippin made an amusing tale of his joining the circus, and of his life with it. Most of his fellow-performers were mentioned, but a notable exception was the Countess de Rimini. There was not time to mention everybody.

He had much to tell about his life in the city, and his friends there, but his entrance to it was barely touched upon, and Alison was under the impression, until later, that he had gone at once to Mrs. Blunt's.

He told her of his two meetings with the Gentleman

Tramp, at the beginning of his journey and towards its end, and of other encounters on the road, one story leading to another, and the narrative jumping all over the calendar in a way that would have bewildered her if it had been a strict chronology that she wanted. But it is only men who are particular about that, in any tale they tell about themselves, and it is well known that most men have great difficulty in recounting their adventures, leaving out so much that a woman wants to know, till at the end of it they are often said to have told nothing, or alternatively that what they have told has had to be dragged out of them. This is because a woman wants to get at the heart of things, when she loves the narrator, and the heart of his adventures to her is the way he bore himself in them.

Alison kept her eyes upon him as he talked. There had been a little shyness between them at the first greeting, but that had passed. They were now completely happy and at ease with one another. Many emotions showed themselves on her face as she listened to him, and pride in him was not the least of them. He did not know that many of her questions were asked to test him, nor perhaps did she; but she was not disappointed in his answers. He had grown to man's estate since he had gone off to see the world a year before, not thinking much about anybody but himself and his own desires, of good stuff, but of stuff that wanted working over and proving, if he were to grow to his rightful stature. She wanted the tale of his year, in as full detail as she could get it, but how it pleased her to find him constantly breaking off in it to talk about his home! He wanted to hear all about their Christmas there, and whether she

had thought about him as much as he had thought about her on that day; and he told her, apparently as an afterthought, returning to the subject of his accident, how he had thought it was she who was coming to him when Lydia found him, and had called her name. It was this that taught her how she would have to probe if she wanted to hear all the things that really mattered in his adventures, and from that moment a confession of what had driven him from the circus became only a question of time, though it was not made that morning under the apple-tree.

It ended with Pippin's homecoming, and all that lay before him in the happy future. It was a great life that he would be leading now, with his work on the land to occupy him, and the innumerable pleasures and satisfactions that went with it. And Alison would be part of it all, as she had always been, but a much larger part. There was nobody else who would understand everything as she did, and to whom he would want to tell everything, down to the last minute detail.

"I haven't ridden a horse for months," said Pippin, "but I shall keep Captain busy coming over to see you, and I think I shall buy another horse. I wish you didn't live so far off, Alison. But when I am twenty-one we will be married, and then we shall always be together."

She laughed at that. "You haven't asked me yet," she said, but without a trace of coquetry.

He took her hand, and they looked at one another, searching for what lay behind the windows of the eye. Then they kissed. It was a sweeter kiss even than the kiss of greeting had been.

A bell rang in the house. Pippin would have gone in

with her to breakfast, but she would not let him. It was natural that he should have seen her first—her home was on the way to his—but his parents must come before others. "Your dear mother has never ceased saying what a dreadful thing it was that you went away," she told him; "and perhaps you would never come back. But your father has always said that it was the best thing for you, and that you would come back directly the year was up, and not want to go away again. So you must go to them now, and your mother will be very pleased that he was right and she was wrong, though perhaps she will not admit that he was right."

She watched him down the road, standing concealed so that he should not know that she was watching him. He walked with a strong and springy step, his shoulders squared and his head held high. She thought she heard him singing to himself, and there was no doubt that he was at the summit of happiness. A very proper man he was, worthy of all a woman's love and trust. Joy and pride in him filled her heart with a happiness as deep as his.

She lost him in the dip of the road, but waited for him to come into sight again, and kept her eyes upon the lessening figure of her lover, and the black dot that was Ben, until they topped the hill and disappeared. And then there was nothing more to stay for, and she went back to the house.

THE END

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